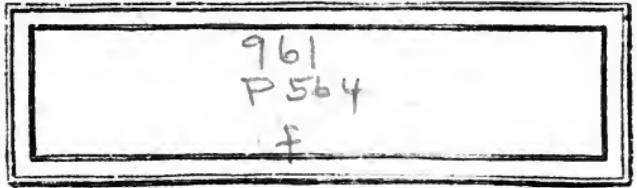
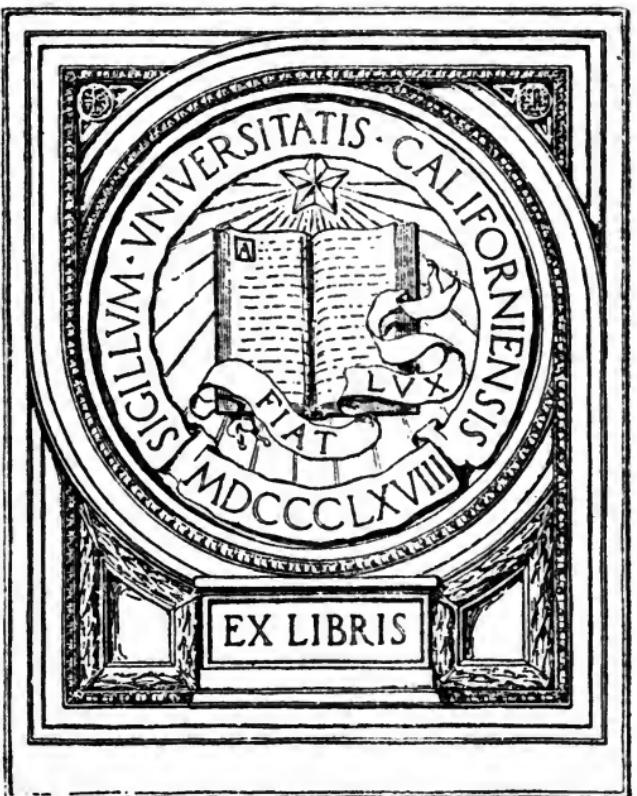


FAITH
TRESILION
▽▽▽
EDEN
PHILLPOTTS





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" But for a time he did indeed appear to be dead." (Page 86.)

FAITH TRESILION

By
EDEN PHILLPOTTS
Author of
"The Mother," "The Lovers," etc.

WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED
LONDON, MELBOURNE AND TORONTO

1916

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CHAPTER I

A HUNTING MORNING

PERHAPS few sportsmen of this generation will know the meaning of a "trencher" pack; but in the olden days a good many such hunted the country. The hounds were kept by different people scattered over a small area, and, in the case of Daleham, most of them lived within sound of the hunter's horn, when it was blown at the market cross.

Tom Otter blew it now and had not long to wait. He was a lean and wiry person of middle-age, and he sat a raw-boned mare of eighteen hands. A weather-stained coat of doubtful pink he wore and a big jockey cap of black velvet, time-worn as the coat and sizes too large for his round head. His face was rat-like, with a broken nose and beady eyes.

Beside him, on a white horse, somewhat fat for the work ahead, sat Henry Sidebottom, publican and host of Daleham's first inn, *The Sailors' Joy*. He was a big, grey man with a fleshy face, clean shaved, and large blue eyes—a gentle creature and no man's enemy. Yet he rated himself high since marriage, having, very wisely, taken his wife's estimate of him as his own. Late in life he had married a fisherman's widow, and she had brought Henry to weigh himself more seriously; for he was no mere publican but a man of rare gifts. He possessed imagination and made verses. Love, which blossomed late in Mr. Sidebottom, naturally quickened this rare accomplishment. He had wooed with rhymes.

Tom Otter, the factotum of the Vicar of Daleham and a man of character, liked well enough the hunting days, for they brought him into prominence among the better sort of his native village; and when, as often happened,

he showed good sport, a more material reward than fame awaited him. Now he blew his old French horn, and the somewhat melancholy note won instant response. Hounds, children, and a time-foundeder fisherman or two began to run and crawl from the little streets and alley-ways round about. Those who kept the pack liberated them at the clamour of the horn, and, familiar enough with the summons, a dozen rough fox-hounds made their appearance, bade each other "good-morning" and saluted the huntsman.

Others of the field also appeared. Tom Otter's master, the Reverend Upcott Baldwin, D.D., rode up on his great chestnut—a handsome man in a grey wig—one of the olden time, a scholar, a parish priest, a sportsman. He was five-and-fifty and numbered many black sheep in his fold, but took human nature in a large spirit and never suffered life to intrude too painfully upon his own existence.

Beside him rode a young man of burly frame with a mean face set on a splendid figure. He was red-haired and his pink coat harmonized ill with his colour. This was one Lieutenant Warner Baldwin, the vicar's nephew, invalided home from the recent wars. He had not seen service, and his ailments, whatever they might have been, swiftly disappeared in the brisk and salubrious air of Daleham. In friendship his uncle had invited him for a lengthened visit, but now the youth had worn out his welcome and the elder secretly wished him gone again. For his nephew made no appeal to Doctor Baldwin. He was intelligent but crafty, and aired opinions the clergyman disliked.

There came, too, the Lord of the Manor, Sir Simeon Glanvil, a baronet of long descent, and his daughters, Jennie and Selina. They were dark, handsome women, attired in black and plum-coloured habits, with long feathers in their hats; while beside them road another girl whose costume and mien showed her not English. Honorine Deschamps was dark also, slight of figure and full of vivacity. Her brown eyes laughed and her shoulders moved as she talked to her cousin, the soldier. Then rode another young man, at present stopping with

the Glanvils. His name was Gilbert Oxenham, and he claimed descent from the famous sea-captain, John Oxenham, who served under Sir Francis Drake at Nombre de Dios, and earned no small part of the glory of that great victory over Spain. The Oxenhams of Tawton were his kinsmen, and he always vowed that the famous white bird of the house would not forget him when his end was at hand. He was fair and of a frank and agreeable manner. He smiled and listened to Jennie Glanvil's banter ; but his eyes roamed elsewhere and regarded Honorine Deschamps. He admired her green habit and thought that she looked like a flower-bud thrust up from its sheath.

Others arrived until the field numbered twenty, and Tom Otter sounded his horn again. Oxenham laughed at the hounds, while Honorine Deschamps supported them.

"Wait till you see them at work," she said. "They are not much to look at, and they do kill cats and eat them sometimes ; but—"

"No doubt they'll do their mangy best, poor beggars. His reverence assures me they seldom have a blank day."

"Let us start, Tom," cried Doctor Baldwin. "We have nine couples. It is enough."

"I don't go without 'Susan,'" replied the huntsman.

"What a cowardice of curs !" commented Lieutenant Baldwin ; whereupon his uncle stood up for the local pack.

"They are good enough hounds," he said. "You are to remember the instinct of the gregarious hunters—the creatures that hunt together. Your wolf is not brave alone ; your tiger or eagle is brave. The use of a fox-hound does not demand bravery. It is the same with men. As a soldier you should know that. The leaders are brave, the rank and file look to them for that spirit which inspires a fighting regiment. There are men—"

"Here's 'Susan'!" cried Honorine. "Poor dear—she grows old."

An ancient hound appeared, acknowledged Tom

Otter's affectionate greeting, and, as though she knew that the company had only waited for her, went forward without stopping. The pack followed and the field came after.

"We'll go up over to the Appleby fuzz brakes," decreed Mr. Otter, and within half an hour the hunters had climbed a mile and a half inland, where stood a thatched farmhouse with white-washed walls surrounded by orchards, now grey and leafless. The Dale river ran here, in a long, placid reach under the trees, and beyond the farm there spread fallow lands which ended at a stone wall. On the other side of it extended half a mile of furze and heath, with a spinny or two of birch, that streaked silvery up through its purple ramage and overhung the Dale on her way to the sea ; while beyond stretched the great woods of Sir Simeon Glanvil's seat, Tudor Towers.

The huntsman winded his horn, and at the sound a man emerged from the rear of the farm and came to the gate with a fox-hound.

"Be going to draw my fuzzes, Tom ? You'll find for sartain, for I lost four chicken only yesternight. You can see the feathers by the stepping-stones. Good-morning, your honours, good sport, your honours ! And you too, Sidebottom, I see—game as a pebble for all your flesh ! "

The man was tall and thin, with a pleasant voice, gracious manners and evasive eyes. He opened a gate for the field and chattered incessantly while horses and hounds passed through.

"Did 'e hear that the death-coach walked again two nights agone, your reverence ? " he inquired of Doctor Baldwin, and the clergyman answered that he had.

"A fearsome thing, and you'll have to take bell, book and candle I'm thinking, your holiness."

"The same idea occurred to me, Ned Cawdle," answered the vicar. "It is not well in a Christian land that these unquiet spirits still move in the habit of life, to fright the living and keep in memory their own troubled and evil days. I'm considering the matter of an exorcism."

Mr. Cawdle fell back shouting "Good luck, good sport, your honours!" and the vicar turned to a young man who rode beside him.

"One of my black sheep," he said. "Hand in glove with the smugglers, but such a clever man that nothing ever happens to him. Lees, our preventive officer, foams at the mouth when Cawdle's name is mentioned. But John Tresilion irks him more, and I much fear that the bitter feud between those men will end in shedding of blood."

The other's hand tightened on his rein at Tresilion's name. He was a striking youth of graceful build and haughty carriage. But neither his dress nor seat on horseback were English in the eyes of English sportsmen, though none denied him splendid horsemanship, together with pluck that often overstepped the limits of wisdom. His eyes were dark, beautiful, and not without a touch of melancholy.

"I don't think you are quite so angry with the smugglers as you would have us believe, Uncle Upcott," he said.

He was the brother of Honorine Deschamps and they dwelt with their widowed mother, the sister of the clergyman.

"The question of free trade, Paul, is a difficult one," answered his uncle, "and these ignorant fishermen have a measure of my sympathy in what they do. There are certain precious products, like the brandy of France, which certainly ought to be free to the world. However—law and order are the first considerations. My philosophy in these matters is exceedingly simple. Having once convinced myself that a question has two sides, I pursue my invariable rule and let it entirely alone. I desire to be friends with my flock and am their minister, not their judge. When, however, a question can have but one side, for a Christian man, then you will find me exceedingly definite and obstinate. One may example the unspeakable outrage of wrecking which until recently lurked in our midst. If the hand of God wills that a craft should perish on our iron-bound cliffs, then I say nothing, and my concern is only with

human life ; but if, as has happened too surely once and again, a good ship has been lured to her doom by false lights, then my soul cries out with horror at the infamy that can plot and plan so damnable a crime. It is Cornish custom, and a Penzance parson of my acquaintance has pointed out that wreckers and stalwart churchgoers are usually found within one skin. But we must argue nothing for this coincidence ; though, indeed, Cawdle, and a few others who stand attainted, all come to church."

Tom Otter was drawing the furze-brakes and soon there rose a solitary tongue.

"Hark to 'Susan'!" he shouted, and instantly the rest of the pack echoed the old hound. The field proceeded after the huntsman, but Dr. Baldwin and Mr. Sidebottom waited and watched.

"He'll go over yonder ploughed lands," foretold the inn-keeper, "and if to the left he turns, that means the cliffs, and if to the right, Tudor Towers. Either way we shall do better by waiting and watching."

"In almost every event that is presented to human calculation, my dear Sidebottom, man does better by waiting and watching, if he possibly can," answered the other. "Equilibrium of mind is the first essential of dignified living, and if we lack it at half a century, there is little hope of usefulness in us."

The fox turned left over the red earth ; the hunters, knowing their way, walked slowly off in an opposite direction and saved themselves three miles of heavy going.

"Down Blackthorn Lane we'll trot, your reverence," said Mr. Sidebottom, "and have [a care not to head [the fox. Then, unless something unexpected happens, we shall cut a good figure in the run.]

"The man who heads Tom Otter's fox makes an enemy for life," answered Doctor Baldwin. "Tom has a large power of charity in most affairs, but stupidity in the field he will not forgive."

They waited presently, on an open down above the sea, and heard the music of the hounds ringing out upon the west wind.

Then, unseen by them, but not three hundred yards distant, reynard slipped by, and ten minutes later came the pack.

"A gallant sight and should make a poem for you, Henry. In my humble judgment a woman of the right build never looks more superb than on horseback," declared the vicar.

"Sir Glanvil's maidens are a brave pair sure enough," admitted Mr. Sidebottom, "but Miss Deschamps is the fairy for me. She rideth as sweetly as her brother. Who would think now that their father was a Frenchman?"

"Why not? That is an insular remark and unworthy a poet," answered the Doctor. "The French are a very noble nation, and Monsieur Deschamps was a very noble man. He fell as heroes fall, and I for one am thankful that the wars are ended, otherwise my stormy nephew might soon have done the like."

"Born for trouble, to say it with respect," answered the inn-keeper. "You can see it in his eyes, your reverence. He has an eagle's eyes and he smarts under the sorrows of the world, as though they were his own."

"I know it, inn-keeper, I know it. His heart is young and not seared by fighting. His master was Napoleon—I had almost said 'his God'; and Bonaparte's downfall hath stricken him hard. But I hope he will turn to the peaceful career of an English county gentleman now and save his mother and me from further anxieties."

The other shook his head.

"Not with those eyes, your reverence."

The field was abreast of them now, and they trotted out and joined the hunters. Behind them came one or two others who had followed their example. The party swept over arable land that extended to cliff edge, now crossing stubble, whence the harvest had come in the past autumn, now avoiding acres sown with wheat; now galloping, when the chase took them on to the springy turf of the downs. They vanished heading east, and the cliff fox responsible for their gallop, guessing little at the termination of the run, went steadily ahead for a distant holt five miles away. He had stood before

hounds on half a dozen occasions and felt in no fear for his mask at this stage of the adventure.

Our business is now with him and we follow him over hill and lee with the cliffs and the grey waters of the Channel on his right and farmlands and forests on his left. But, save for a detour inland through a wood and over a stream, where he stopped for a moment to lap, he held to the cliffs, and presently, ahead of him, towered a promontory. The land climbed here, and upon it stood a wood of naked beech, the aged and moss-grown trees stunted and blown out of straightness by unsleeping winds from the sea. In the midst of the wood was a large ruin, a place known as Hordell's Hall, famous in olden time as the stronghold of an ancient family, but now sunk into decay and rendered sinister by evil rumours of supernatural things. The fox, upon whom hounds had gained considerably, headed for the ruin. He darted through a pair of lordly gateposts, that still stood, with the battered griffins of the Hordells upon them to mark the entrance way ; then he ran half a mile up the forlorn avenue of time-stricken beeches, and at last, climbing over broken walls, made haste through a ruined and grass-grown courtyard and plunged into the darkness of a low door beyond. Here, it seemed, he knew his way in the intricate ground-plan of the ruin, for he turned and twisted, then jumped down where rubbish had blocked the entrance of a cellar and soon crept through a conduit that took his carcase, but would not have admitted a hound.

And then a tragic surprise awaited him, for exhausted now and beat, he ran almost between the legs of a man. In a subterranean chamber of Hordell's—a place only known to half a dozen in Daleham—there sat a youth of five-and-twenty with curly hair and a strong countenance. He was a thought underhung, but the expression of his eyes and the lines of his mouth banished any forbidding cast that this peculiarity might have imparted to him. His fair face, strong tanned neck and flaxen hair had spoken a sailor, without his sea boots and guernsey. The latter was of blue and white in alternate stripes ; while on his head he

wore a dirty, red knitted cap that hung over one ear, and in his ears were small gold rings. His face was weather-worn for so young a man, but it was handsome, and a slight droop of the right eyelid added piquancy to the expression.

He sat smoking a pipe, with a lighted candle in a horn lantern and a pistol beside him ; and he kept guard over a mingled pile of boxes and kegs packed together here, with a tarpaulin drawn over them, to throw off the wet which dripped through the cellar roof.

Power of will marked the features of Nicholas Tresilion. He had been brought up in a stormy school and trained to danger and difficulty. His wits were ready and he needed them now, for the advent of the fox spoke of sudden peril. There was another way into the cellar than that by which the fox had entered, and through that hounds might come. He saw in a moment that they would do so, and before the hunted creature could escape, he had gripped its back with both hands, leapt to his feet and carried the struggling thing to its doom.

He crept out of the cellar by a narrow exit, dropped into another, where one ray from above sent a thread of white daylight through it, and then, after some turning and twisting through the labyrinth of the ruins, reached an unceiled chamber with two doors.

The indignant fox had contrived to get in one bite, but Nicholas held on, and knowing the line that hounds must pursue, ran as fast as he was able to meet them. Fortune favoured him, for the pack was ahead of the field and none witnessed the extraordinary sight of a sailor hastening to the hounds with their quarry. Soon he met them, and as most of the creatures were his friends, they merely swarmed round him while he held the fox above his head and did not throw it to them.

Then came Tom Otter, Paul Deschamps, Selina Glanvil and young Gilbert Oxenham, with others also well up. They stood now nearly a quarter of a mile from the ruin, and the leaders were in at the death. But some diversion held back the majority of the field, and while the sailor explained that a fox had fallen at his feet forty yards ahead of the hounds, and that he had

picked him up to save brush and mask, Paul Deschamps and Oxenham turned to where a dozen riders had suddenly stopped half a mile further back. There stood Doctor Baldwin on a smoking horse at the cliff edge, and beside him were Lieutenant Baldwin, Honorine Deschamps, Jennie Glanvil, Sir Simeon, Mr. Sidebottom and the rest. Some had dismounted, and the attention of all was attracted by two objects beneath them on the beach.

That the young fisherman, Nicholas Tresilion, should be upon the cliffs was not surprising, and the tragedy now discovered by the fox-hunters gave colour to his explanation that he was seeking his father.

Soon Tom Otter, with the trophies of the chase at saddle bow, rode back to his master, but Tresilion did not go with him. Little guessing at the matter of their concern, he walked in the other direction, stood upon the head of the cliff awhile, and then, when all was quiet, returned to his den. But before doing so, he piled up stones at the exit and heaped them as high as his head, so that no inquisitive hound might presently penetrate the secret of a smuggler's storehouse.

CHAPTER II

THE END OF THE DUEL

ON the beach, under the troubled eyes of the watchers, there lay two men closely locked in hate and death. Each had a hand on the other's throat, and from the standpoint of those on the cliff, two hundred feet above them, it was impossible to recognize with certainty what men they were. Yet none who knew Daleham felt any doubt.

To climb the precipices at this spot was impossible, and as the tide was making and would soon be over the bodies, little time remained for action.

Sir Simeon took command and others hastened to do his bidding.

"Too certainly John Tresilion, the smuggler, and exciseman Lees lie there," he said. "Get home, girls. This is no sight for you. Now which is the nearest place of descent, and have we time to get there before the sea is on them?"

Tom Otter, who knew the cliffs as well as any glede or jackdaw that homed upon them, made reply.

"You can only get down at the Red Goyle, three miles nearer to Daleham, Sir Simeon."

"Then gallop to the nearest farmhouse for their well-rope and see it can be trusted. Some of the young men have got to descend as quickly as possible. These poor creatures may not even be dead, though there is little reason to hope they live. At any rate they must not be washed to sea."

Otter rode away, with the hounds after him, and both Deschamps and Oxenham offered to descend. They dismounted and hunted the cliffs, while Doctor Baldwin,

hearing that Nicholas was at hand, sought him, that he might break in his ear the evil news. But Nicholas was back in his burrow and the vicar hunted in vain.

Mr. Sidebottom reminded him of a recent prophecy.

" 'Tis seldom a prediction comes true so swift," he said, "but not about an hour ago your reverence foretold to your nephew that blood would be shed between those men. I heard you speak. For five years—ever since Albert Lees set foot in Daleham—has the feud run between them, and Tresilion won ever. What made them fall to fighting here we shall never know, though doubtless the son could tell us. They're a crafty folk, the Tresiliions, yet who can quarrel with them? The daughter's a grand girl, and the mother, for all her mountain of flesh, is the cleverest woman in Daleham—after my wife."

"By the same token," answered the Doctor, "I must see them to-day and break this shocking news."

"I feel sure that it can be no great surprise," answered the inn-keeper, "for he has carried his life in his hand these many years. He was as different from our easy Daleham fishermen, as his Cornish lugger is different from their trawling ketches."

Meanwhile, Paul Deschamps, at some risk to his own neck, had found a way to descend the precipice. A band of scrub grew half way down; but there was no visible means of reaching it from above or below; yet from here it appeared that the men must have fallen, since no mark of a struggle occurred on the summit of the cliff, and from no other possible spot could they have reached their present position. Deschamps shouted up the news that the men were indeed Lees and Tresilion, and that both were dead. The tide already lapped about them where they lay gripped at the cliff foot. Paul was powerless to return by the way he came; but he found it possible to draw the dead under the cliff, above the reach of the sea. Then Tom Otter returned with a stout well-rope, equal to the strain to be put upon it, and soon the end swung over the cliff and was lowered to the beach below.

In turn Deschamps made fast the dead and they were dragged slowly aloft. The corpse of John Tresilion went first. He was a tall and wiry man of sixty with curly hair and eyes, like his son's; but the hair was grey and the face wrinkled. His neck had been broken by the fall; while in the case of the exciseman, who fell undermost, it appeared that he must have dropped on a rock, for his right side had been terribly mutilated and pieces of a tobacco pipe in his pocket driven into his body.

Presently the rope descended for the third time, and Paul Deschamps, making it fast round his own shoulders and under one thigh, was drawn aloft.

Then a farmer brought up a "truck-a-muck"—a little sledge commonly used in agriculture at that period—and the dead, side by side, were drawn back to Daleham. Lees was a bachelor, and none existed to mourn his loss; but Tresilion possessed a wife, children and many friends. For years the smuggler had been the most popular man in the village and a sort of uncrowned king among the folk. Strength of character and kindness of disposition won for him this distinction. He was free and generous, and no man or woman could speak ill of him, though the State held him an enemy. Nominally a fisherman, there existed no doubt that his great lugger, *The Grey Bird*, never returned to port without good harvest from the sea; but though he often used his drift nets industriously enough, it was not upon fishing that his prosperity depended. Men said in jest that while everybody had seen *The Grey Bird* set sail and stand out for the trawling grounds with the rest of the Daleham fleet, none ever saw her return. She would vanish away and be gone for an uncertain period of days or weeks, then suddenly, when some morning dawned, there would she be lying at her moorings once again.

Daleham rejoiced uneasily in the operations of Tresilion and his crew. They told how he had outsailed the Government cutters from Plymouth and outwitted the excise officers for a dozen years. Only Albert Lees and his coast-guardsmen were actively against them, and

now the inveterate battle, for reasons that none could guess, had ended in the simultaneous death of Tresilion and his enemy.

There was mourning in Daleham as the truck-a-muck drew up at the home of the dead. Lees they had deposited at his eyrie on the cliffs ; but the other man they brought home to his wife and daughter.

Doctor Baldwin came also to comfort the women, and with him he brought Mademoiselle Deschamps, who knew Faith Tresilion exceedingly well. The girls had grown to womanhood together, and while their ways in life ran far apart, Honorine never lost sight of her childhood's playmate, and found in the smuggler's daughter a spirit more congenial than that of her companions in the society of the neighbourhood.

Emma Tresilion, a woman with a massive body, great dark eyes and a voice like a man's, was bed-ridden and lived behind a screen in the kitchen of her home. But from her bed of sickness she ruled her household, for her will was iron and her sense unerring.

The news of her husband's death had reached her before Doctor Baldwin arrived, and she was sitting up in a big pea-jacket which burst open at her immense bosom and showed a dirty red shirt underneath. Her grey hair was covered by a black cap that descended over her ears ; the bulk of her enormous body was hidden under the bed-clothes ; her hands were loading a tobacco pipe when the visitors entered. Her daughter wept on the old woman's breast ; but Emma shed no tear.

"I've been counting for this to happen for twelve year, Upcott Baldwin," she said, "and now it's come and I'm ready, and so will my boy be ready. You can't say Albert Lees bested my John—nobody can ever say that."

She lighted her pipe, smoked and stared in front of her. Her eyes blazed out of her huge face like live coals. She had been handsome once, but was now a mere mass of flesh. Doctor Baldwin, familiar with her ways and methods, answered calmly, as though the matter were no more important than a game of cards ; then Honorine put her arms round Faith Tresilion

to comfort her. Times were harder then and sentiment rare in the homes of the poor.

"Don't snivel, Faith," said her mother. "Get down the village to Mrs. Hooker and give her my compliments and tell her to come up this instant moment and lay John Tresilion out; and Egg had best be called to measure him for his coffin. And tell 'em to bring my poor man's carcase in here till the doctor comes."

"We heard Nicholas was on the cliffs but did not see him," said the Doctor. The old woman considered, but kept her thoughts to herself. Then she heaved a sigh that shook her great four-post bed.

"Cut off in the flower of his might by a damned gauger," she said. "I knowed that would be the end. As good a man as ever left a widow and children to bless his name. And not only them. You mark me, Upcott Baldwin, all Daleham will be at his grave-side—all but me; and I'd be carried there, dead or alive, only the winter air would kill me, and I can't leave my boy and girl now."

She stood in no need of consolation and her heart was hidden from him.

"None respected John's great nature more than I did," declared Doctor Baldwin. "Upon the subject of free trade with France it is possible to have two opinions; on the question of your John's character two opinions were impossible. Generous, genial, gentle to the weak, courteous to his betters, and even a church-goer upon occasion. In fact, he was on the side of the angels, Emma, and I wish there were more like him."

"My son be much in his pattern. And I expect them that knew what John was, to be his friend also. And I'll thank you to bury him inside the churchyard wall, where it runs along the beach, so as he won't lie more'n fifty yards from high tide. He chose the place himself a good bit ago."

"Can you explain this tragedy?" asked the vicar presently. "The men, of course, were enemies and had to be. For my part I can't pretend to say I admired Albert Lees. He was a sour and narrow spirit, and revengeful. But for some time I fancied that—"

" You needn't ask me nothing about it," said the old woman, " for I shan't tell you. You're our side, I reckon, but your memory's too long, and if there's an inquiry and I said this or that and you were called upon for evidence, you wouldn't keep it in. You've got your parson's conscience and your own ideas of your duty to your neighbours. So the less you know the better. But this I'll say—"

She stopped and lighted her pipe again.

" No I won't. I won't say nothing."

" I don't blame you, Emma. I don't want to know," answered the Doctor.

" And let it be told that it was fair kill and kill," she said. " For my part I shouldn't have thought that a slack-twisted daddy-long-legs, like Albert Lees, could have done it without a pistol bullet to help him, and I dare say they'll find a bit of lead in my poor saint if they look for it. 'Tis no odds now. You can't be deader than dead, and I've got to look forward. Tell my daughter I want her about family matters, Upcott Baldwin. And, after the funeral, if you'll come and have a pipe and a drop of the best and put up a good volume of prayer, I shall take it seasonable."

But the old woman spoke more gently an hour later, when the crowd had scattered from her door and the dust of her dead partner lay in the kitchen within her sight. Then she consoled her girl.

" Us'll shed tears of blood in due course," she said. " The like was never heard that my John should lie there stark and me lie here quick. But bellies will get leery,¹ though a man's father dies, and I lay Nicholas is cussing us all to blazes and wondering why for somebody don't come to take him food and relieve him. 'Tis easy to see what happened. Father was on his way from Broken Rocks, by the secret passage to Hor-dell's Hall, and Lees, after prying in vain all these years, spotted him and followed. Then, where the scrub hangs out over the cliff, father must have stopped a bit, as he would do, and a minute after he come face to face with gauger following on the secret path. 'Twas do or die

¹ *Leery.* Empty.

then, for he couldn't let Lees take that bit of knowledge back into the world. But when it came to killing, father met his match seemingly. He tried to put Albert over the cliff I reckon."

"Father would never have done that," declared Faith.

"Not for choice; but there was no choice. Once Lees knew and it was all up. Now they've both took their secret to Kingdom Come where there's none to profit by it. *The Grey Bird's* out with Monk Karswill fishing to-day, and she won't be home afore morning, so there's none to relieve Nicholas but you. And the sooner you're off the better. Tell him to come home. Egg will be along to measure father presently."

"Shall I bide up there?" asked the girl; but her mother declared there was no need.

"Business is business, though masters break their necks," she said. "There's only one to fear, and that's Ned Cawdle. Still, in a case like this, the widow and the fatherless ought to be safe. Besides, we know to a keg what's there, and if Nicholas thinks it better to go back, he can. But I must see him. He's master now, and there's a lot before him with the crew."

Faith, filling a basket with food, set out after dark on her long tramp. She followed a path to the east of Daleham, then descended to the beach and walked out where the sands were firm. It was the ebb, and she made swift progress on the hard sand. Then she came to the place where her father had perished, and, despite the darkness, found a way hidden from Deschamps, when he had sought one earlier in the day. With the tide low she proceeded where a ridge of rocks ran seawards, and presently brushing the heavy curtain of seaweed that covered a perpendicular ledge revealed a hole behind it. The entrance was low but wide, and within it grew higher and ran at a sharp angle into the cliff. It was artificial; but time had long reduced it to ruins and the steps within were broken and worn. To the height of the tide, limpets and red sea-anemones clung upon the stairs and sides of the tunnel; but their living was precarious, since feet not seldom came

and went by this secret passage. The place was not wholly unknown, for it had been associated with other evidences of human activity round about on the beach, and the ruins of a vanished pond, built below the level of the high tide, might still be traced; but few were concerned with these fragments, and none save Doctor Baldwin, who was something of an antiquary, connected them with Hordell's Hall above. The passage from sea to land had been partially explored by honest folk, but at a certain point great stones apparently blocked it, and none had penetrated beyond them for many years, until John Tresilion had gone forth, prawn net on shoulder, hidden there, and after many hours of patient work succeeded in clearing a way through the tunnel. He discovered then that the secret path led upwards and opened in a bank of scrub which hung on the cliff at a place deemed inaccessible. From there the passage turned into the cliff presently and ultimately ended under Hordell's Hall. The discovery was of infinite significance to Tresilion, and since the day he made it, many tons of contraband had been conveyed aloft to safe storage in the ruin.

Faith Tresilion knew her way well enough, and soon upon her brother's ear fell the sound of feet. He was angry and blamed his father for imposing such an unusual watch upon him, for it had been on the way to relieve Nicholas, in the dawn light when the tide last ran low, that John met his death. Now the boy heard of their loss and took it as his mother had done before him.

"Then I know how it was," he said, "and time and again I've told father to come t'other way here and skirt about and not always climb up from Broken Rocks. That devil have traced him out at last, and no doubt he got into the tunnel after father was through and the stones moved. Then he crept on and on till he reached the ledge where the scrub grows, and then father, resting there, heard him coming behind. No doubt father laid low in the scrub then, to see who 'twas, and then to his wrath he found Lees on his tracks. They fought there and died together. Poor father! How's mother took it?"

"Mother's just mother," said Faith.

He ate the food that she had brought and decided not to return.

"All the world will know about it," he said, "and you can't trust Cawdle. He knows the last haul's here, and he'll think so like as not that it bides to-night without a soul to watch it, and he's just the sort to hop up afore morning with his light cart to help himself and say nothing about it."

"When was it to be moved?" she asked.

"To-morrow night," her brother answered. "But it may have to wait a bit after this. Poor father! I'm skipper now, Faith. But I'm not half the man he was—and never shall be."

They talked of the future and the girl wept again. He kissed her tenderly and comforted her as well as he was able.

"We must carry on as he would have willed us," said Nicholas. "And I'll do his bidding and mother's, be sure of that. You shan't need to fear for me. And we'll set a proper marble stone to him presently. And please God they don't bury that dog Lees within a league of him, else they'll be on to one another's throats underground again. Now you'd best to go home by the road, for the tide's turned and the channel end will be under water afore you get back to it."

They went to the limits of the ruin together, and he was about to leave her, where the great gate-posts towered darkly upon the night and where the trees made a sighing and creaking above their heads.

"If father walks, 'twill be you he'll come to see," said Faith.

"I wish to God as he would," answered her brother. "There's some things as I'd dearly like to know; and one is how he got worsted and came to his end; and another is what——"

He stopped.

"Hark!" he said.

The rattle of wheels and the dull thud of horses' hoofs on the turf arrested them.

"What did I tell you? That's Cawdle—and he'll

say he's just come over to keep me company and act the neighbour!"

"Let him see he's got a man to deal with from the first," said Faith.

The shameless Neddy Cawdle from Appleby's, who had been the smugglers' ally ashore for many years, knew of the hidden haul that awaited his attention anon, and judging in the shock of Tresilion's death, that it might be left unguarded on this night, had sneaked out with his pony and trap to smuggle the smuggled and do a little stroke on his own account.

Instead he heard Nicholas, and though he assured the youth that he was cruelly misjudged, Mr. Cawdle found himself harshly ordered home in a manner that showed the new master was at least as firm as the old.

"And you can give my sister a lift back, you dirty old jackal," said Nicholas, "so you won't have had your drive for nought. You shall hear the night for moving the stuff. It won't be till after my father's buried. And if you come again afore the time you're bidden, I'll tell the watchman to put a bullet into your head. Mother always told father you couldn't be trusted ; but you keep your claws off the widow and orphan, Ned, or I'll damned soon cut them."

CHAPTER III

PAUL DESCHAMPS

THE previous career of Honoreine's brother may be stated in a few words. His father perished in Bonaparte's Italian campaign of 1796, trusting his infant son and daughter to their mother's care. General Pierre Deschamps left nothing behind him save a name glorious in war; but his wife enjoyed possession of a small English estate, and when he fell, she returned with her two children to her native land.

Four Oaks was a modest matter of a dwelling-house and three farms, each of a hundred acres; and on these revenues the lady brought up her boy and girl to the best of her power. She hoped very fervently that her son would see fit to stay at home and follow the paths of peace; but this ambition was doomed to disappointment. A long line of ancestors handed down the fighting blood of France to Paul. It ran by divers channels through his veins; he hated the Bourbons, who had been his father's enemies, and when he came of age, in the first month of the year 1814, he left his home, hastened to France and joined Soult, who was a kinsman of his house. He came well versed in politics and war, and first saw active service at the bloody battle of Toulouse. He took his place in the night march of three leagues that followed; and almost immediately after it, was stunned before the crushing news that Napoleon had abdicated at Fontainebleau six days previous to the battle. For a time Soult refused to acknowledge the provisional government immediately established in the name of Louis XVIII; but further intelligence convinced him of the truth of the catastrophe, and he subscribed to the convention.

To his grief, the military career of young Deschamps was thus nipped in the bud. He learned full particulars of his master's ill fortune, and how a man, elevated in the boy's fiery spirit to omnipotency, had descended from his high estate into a position from which it seemed impossible that he could ever rise again. The disastrous campaign against the allies from the Rhine had put a climax to Napoleon's difficulties. He was called to see the Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia enter Paris ; and since they peremptorily refused to treat with the Usurper, he found himself forced to abdicate. Deschamps wept to find that the fallen eagle was reduced to Elba for dominion and a pension of six million francs for dole. Great Britain, while no party to this treaty, assented to its conditions, and Bourbon Louis, who had dwelt in England during his exile, entered Paris a month later, to sign an immediate treaty of peace and alliance with all the great European Powers. In June the allied armies evacuated Paris and Deschamps returned home, whither his first cousin, Doctor Baldwin's other nephew, Warner Baldwin, had already preceded him. But the red-haired lieutenant was glad enough to escape even the spectacle of war, while to the Frenchman, his first taste had but served to whet an appetite and inspire a character endowed for it by nature.

He kept up a correspondence with his friends and lived in hope that the tiger caged at Elba might presently break his prison bars and leap free upon Europe once again.

He spent his time in sport and was regarded with no unfriendly eye by the country-side. For his physical courage was extraordinary and his modesty none could question. But his temper was uncertain ; he brooked no slight uttered against the fallen tyrant, and he despised any lack of physical bravery as a vice objectionable in women and beneath contempt in men.

He kept his gentle mother on thorns and his lively sister in raptures. His instinct was to side with the unpopular and those who laboured for doubtful and oppressed causes. Thus it came about that the smug-

glers found in him a friend, and he had struck up a close understanding with the dead John Tresilion and the living Nicholas, that led to consequences immediately to be told.

There came an evening soon after the double funeral of Albert Lees and the master of *The Grey Bird*, when Madame Anna Deschamps sat with her children after dinner in a long and low drawing-room of simple distinction. She was a gentle creature, still possessed of beauty and a stately mien, that reminded one forcibly of her brother. She sat now and listened to Honorine singing at a little piano, whose tone was thin, yet sweet enough. Then the gentle scene was spoiled, for voices lifted in anger broke upon it, and a moment later Paul and his cousin, Warner, entered the room. Behind them followed their uncle, for the Baldwins had been dining at Four Oaks.

"Peace, rude boys!" said the vicar, "since you will to join the ladies, I beg that you remember your manners and abandon this unseemly argument."

"Let Aunt Anna decide then," answered the lieutenant. "Women, I'll wager, have never been on the side of war."

"They have ever been on the side of right," answered Paul; "and when right is opposed, be the forces what they may that oppose it, then war is the only way. Those that will not hear reason must hear cannon!"

"Little reason will any man or woman ever hear from you," answered his cousin.

Paul retorted with a sneer.

"A soldier to cry down war!"

"I am a soldier, as you say, but from necessity, not choice," returned the other sourly. "Beggars cannot be choosers, and when a commission was offered to me, I had to accept it. But I assert again that war is not going to be the last word in the world, and that a time will come when our children's children will look back with wonder and horror at our methods of settling our quarrels. Your Bonaparte is a brigand—a menace to civilization—and you may make a hero of him if you please, but posterity will not."

"Keep his name off your lips," answered the other youth. "You have no intellect to measure the mightiness of that man. And as for war, none here is on your side. My father fell gloriously for the right, and no man can live or die more nobly than did he."

"Heroism does not sanctify war," answered the other. "I say nothing about heroism; I only declare that it might be devoted to nobler purpose than taking the life of your fellow-men."

"Who shall deny that?" asked Madame Deschamps. "Unhappily we cannot conceive a world without armed hosts moving upon its face and meeting to destroy each other, when peace has fled from the councils of men; but Warner must not be blamed for dreaming of a happier world."

"Then let him sell out and turn his sword into a pruning-hook," answered Paul. "It is a disgrace to the first and noblest profession that a man who wears his king's uniform should decry war. What say you, Uncle Upcott?"

"A minister of the Prince of Peace——" began Warner Baldwin, but the Doctor held up his hand.

"Nay, nephew, I am well able to sustain this argument without any help from you, and doubtless can give as good an account of my attitude to the question as you would be able to offer. My Master came not to bring peace, because He knew that the sword must garner before the spirit can glean. Myriads of men have died a sudden death in the field and manifold have been the causes for which they suffered; but not one went to his end save by the will of God. My honoured friend, Mr. Wordsworth, a poet still too little known, since his appeal is only to the cultured, pious and philosophic mind, has called Carnage the Daughter of the Almighty. And who shall doubt the truth of that awful image, when we read the history of mankind? War is a wholesome though fearful adjunct of civilization. It has the harsh and painful, but cathartic quality of the tempest, the thunderbolt and the east wind. Our race would sink into degeneration were the black

and menacing shadow of Bellona lost in the sentimental and sickly cloudiness of Peace. Was it not Heraclitus who said that 'War is the father of all things'? It is in fact a necessity, as the struggle of the natural elements is a necessity. Whether it may ever happen otherwise, as Warner dreams, it is not within our foresight to declare; but I, for one, maintain a contrary conclusion; and my opinion is based upon the Bible. War raged in Heaven before it came to earth remember. Ere God created this planet and saw that it was good, the rebel angels had been hurled headlong from their thrones. There can be no eternal peace: it is contrary to experience and philosophy and religion. I will go further and say that Heaven may have its wars until the Almighty finally banishes Evil for ever, or by divine alchemy transmutes Evil into Good, and suffers a humbled and repentant Satan to kneel before Him. But for us, here and now, war is a condition of life. We are all soldiers, and it is meet and right that we should all battle to the death in some worthy cause."

The doctor's discourse gained its object, which was not to convince either disputant, but to give them time to grow cool.

Paul was the first to express regret.

"Then uncle stands for me, as I knew he would, and victors can afford to be generous. Your hand, cousin. If I spoke uncivil I'm sorry for it. For the rest we must abide content to differ. To hear the countryman of Nelson and Wellington cry down war woke my wonder, but it need not have angered me." He smiled charmingly and held out his hand to Warner; but Warner showed no good grace in answer.

"I'm older by a year than you, Paul, and you were at your mother's table. However, I accept your apology."

Instantly the other was angered again.

"With ill grace, however. Not that your manners trouble me. You may be called to join your regiment sooner than you guess, cousin; and since your conclusions jump with your inclination and you fear war as much as you hate it, be wise and throw up your commission while

you may do so without stain. Next time you might not fall ill, but be called upon to fight."

The elder blushed brick-red under this insult.

" You shall answer for that," he said. " God judge me if I endure poison from a French tongue on English soil! Never will I forget it, Paul Deschamps."

He turned and left the room abruptly, and the doctor rated Paul.

" You are no gentleman—no son worthy to be your mother's, or your father's," he declared. " Warner has little to commend him, poor wretch, save a carcase as big as bull's beef in which, like a pip in a shaddock, is set the heart of a tomtit; still he is human and we must believe that it was genuine sickness that prevented him from taking his part at Vittoria. Whether terror produced his indisposition one cannot say; but it was probably real enough, though the cause may have been unreal. I do not like Warner; his principles and opinions are opposed to my own in most directions, and he has enough education to argue sophistically, with words that might confuse and even convince the uneducated; but he is my guest and remains under my roof for the winter months at least; therefore I have a right to order you to treat him with better grace and more patience."

" A coward is the hatefulest pattern of man," said Paul. " I could forgive him all but that. Still I grant you that was not a fair stroke. I'll express my sorrow when next we meet."

" Do it at the first opportunity, Paul," urged his sister. " There was a very ugly look in Cousin Warner's eyes when he left us."

" He can't help being ugly, poor devil; I don't blame him for that," answered her brother. " But he's ugly inside. We'll hope his aunt will die and leave him her money soon. Then he'll grow sweeter. Shall I see you home, uncle?"

But the doctor declined.

" I am not going home for an hour or more," he answered. " Your mother and I have something to talk about."

"Then I'll be gone, for there's an appointment that must not be broken," said Paul, and his uncle spoke again.

"Tell them to fetch round my horse at ten o'clock, that will be soon enough," he directed; whereon the young man withdrew, Honorine returned to the piano, and the doctor and his sister discussed matters relating to her.

"I propose to speak of young Gilbert Oxenham," he began.

"I know you do. And pray let it be of Gilbert and not his ancestors, otherwise you will never come to him," she said.

He shrugged his shoulders and obeyed. The talking was on his side and Madame Deschamps had little to say. When Honorine stopped presently, they bade her go on again, that she might not hear her own name on their lips.

Meantime Paul, flinging a bearskin cloak over his shoulders and drawing a bearskin cap over his eyes, hastened through the night to a familiar tryst.

He was impatient, for events had conspired to separate him from the one on earth who meant most to him at this season.

Since war slumbered, the young man had turned his thoughts upon love, and now the salt of his days was a woman.

He left his home and, sinking to the valley of the Dale, passed under the trees that fringed that placid stream and marked the pattern of a thousand implicated branches thrown by moonlight in the silver water. Beside a little curve of the river was a seat of rough oak poles, that had been set there for Doctor Baldwin. He loved the angler's art, and would often descend to Dale at dimpsy light of evening with his rod and a book. Then would he read, so long as the west was bright enough; and presently, when twilight fainted to night, he fished and caught many a heavy peel under the moon of August nights.

The doctor's seat was not empty, for a girl sat there. She heard Paul's approach long before he was visible,

yawned and prepared to meet him. No sparkle of love lit her eyes ; but interest and pleasure were not absent from them. He came, and their greeting revealed that whatever the Frenchman might feel, the English maiden's heart was not yet lost. He swept off his hat, bowed, took her hand with both his own and shook it.

"It was good of you to come," he said. "I have counted the hours as I always do."

Faith Tresilion returned the pressure of his hand.

"I'm glad to be here, Master Paul," she answered simply. "Nicholas has been at me ever since father died to fetch the packet he got from Paris when he was at Boulogne—his last trip—though little he thought so."

"Never mind the packet. Tell me how you are. I'd have swum across the sea to have come and comforted you and dried your eyes, Faith. I hated to keep away ; but the fault was yours not mine. Till you give me the right—"

The man, honestly and truly enamoured, had prayed his sister's friend to marry him a score of times ; but she was wiser than he and recognized the impossibility of any such betrothal. There was no place for illusion to dwell in her home ; neither indeed could her heart blind her. She was strong, sagacious and practical, as well as fair to look upon. Unlike her brother she had a dark Celtic skin and, while as brave as Nicholas, possessed more intellect and very pretty gifts of intuition and invention that had often stood her family in good stead. From her mother came her searching and swift mind, from her father her courage and invincible good humour. She was slight, but very strong and never knew weariness. Many had courted her ; no man as yet had touched her heart ; and very well she knew that despite his fire and fervour, his delicate manners and rare charm of speech, Paul Deschamps would never make her love him. But she was flattered by his attentions and enjoyed her stolen meetings from a natural love of intrigue. Being still wholly innocent of the meaning of love, she found it not in her to guess at what the young man really felt and endured on her behalf, but he was in mighty earnest and she, the happier

and richer in his secret adoration, little realized what she had come to mean to him. There was no romance in Faith and she was not a flirt. Indeed the friendship was exceedingly practical from her point of view. She failed to understand how such a brilliant and cultured young man as Deschamps could win the least entertainment or pleasure from her company, and honestly she doubted the truth of his fiery assertions that he would live and die for her. She felt that such mighty protestations were part of his emotional character and guessed that they meant less than Paul himself imagined and must not be taken too seriously. She quite underrated the extent of his devotion and the nature of his hopes. But on the other hand she was keenly alive to her advantages in the friendship. They were mental, not material. Until this night he had not offered a gift whose value could be measured ; but he had helped her with French and so made her more useful to her father ; and he had widened her mind in many directions and given her some general knowledge of politics—tinctured of course by his own opinions.

For his part, it was something elusive and not English about the girl that had captivated him. Her beauty none might question, and many a fisherman had offered to wed her ; but the fine quality of her, so he told himself, demanded a subtle and cultivated man to appreciate. He was sanguine that, when her own intellect widened under his ministration, love would presently spring out of the friendship on her side, as it had already done on his. His wish was to lift her away from her class. He even dreamed that she was only there by some secret accident. Honoree, indeed, always declared that Faith was a changeling and dropped by mischievous pixies into the home of the Tresilions. But that was not so. The girl belonged to her own, loved them and shared their distinctions, although she possessed certain personal gifts that the highest born maiden might have been proud to display. In another sphere, doubtless, such gifts had shone to nobler advantage ; and this Paul Deschamps perceived and strove with all his power to win her.

Guessing what was still uppermost in her heart the young man now spoke words of comfort.

She thanked him for them and talked of John Tresilion and his adventures. Faith loved to dwell on the occasions when she had been able to help her father.

Then she remembered the packet in her pocket and drew it forth.

"He never forgot anything," she said. "This was your commission, and a man travelled all the way from Paris to Boulogne with it and wouldn't trust it to any hand but father's own. I like to think that almost his last act was to serve you."

"Would that I could have served him," answered Paul. "It is dreadful to think that some hateful trick cost him his life. But Lees had suffered too long and too often. He was overmastered by his hate of John Tresilion. He leapt at the first opportunity to destroy him."

"Nicholas reckons that it is clear enough," answered Faith. "He must have spied on father, and for once father wasn't quick enough and Lees found out something 'twas fatal for him to know. Then one or both had to pay. Lees was younger than father, and when he found father meant putting him over the cliff for his pains, he fought to the death and took father with him."

"Your brother will go on?"

"We've always been wild hawks from a Cornish cliff and shall bide so. We hate the tame herd. So soon be a sheep on the downs as think and live like the Daleham folk!"

He sympathized with the sentiment very heartily.

"I'd have you shine, where your light might be seen by those who could appreciate it."

"Nay, nay—you hold me too high," she said. "I'm proud to think a young gentleman like you can win pleasure of my company; but I'm only a black-browed Cornisher, with little to boast of but strong arms and a quick turn of mind. You haven't seen many grand ladies yet. You wait till you know more about them. You're like the little mouse who lived on breadcrumbs

and thought they were the finest food in the world; but he came upon a bit of cheese one night, and then he very soon forgot all about the breadcrumbs. You haven't found your bit of cheese yet."

"I've found nectar and ambrosia for body and soul," he said, "and the world will never show me such another banquet—no, nor Heaven either."

She laughed, a little gentle laugh, and he opened the parcel on his lap.

"Weren't you curious to know what this precious matter was?"

"Not I. My family's business is enough for me."

She gasped with admiration a moment later, however, when he revealed the contents of the packet. It was a case of leather lined with golden silk, and within lay a jewel—a ring of eight small diamonds with a fine ruby of "pigeon's blood" lustre in the midst.

"What think you of that?" he asked.

In the moonlight the arms of the star glittered like dew, but the ruby appeared almost black.

"Like a star dropped out of the sky. I never saw anything so beautiful."

"It is for you."

No conventions prevented Faith from accepting the gift and she took it with gratitude and joy.

"You dear, kind Paul! Why, 'tis worth a king's ransom I'm sure. Never was such a lovely thing seen before. And I'll keep it to my dying day. But I wish—how I wish I could give back a little for all I get from you. 'Tis for the strong to give and the weak to take; but we Tresilion folk—we're not like that."

"That you can care for me, even a tiny bit, is payment enough and far outweighs the greatest that I can ever do for you," he answered.

She looked at him and would have kissed him, but her instinct prevented that. To her a kiss was no very solemn matter. She was emotional sometimes and had given and taken kisses on far less provocation than this earnest lover's precious gift. But she knew that to Paul Deschamps any such surrender would mean far more than it did to her, and also far more than she

meant it to mean. She dimly perceived how high he held her and understood that a kiss must stand for nothing less than love in his eyes.

So she kissed the diamond star instead.

"I'll pay you back some day, Master Paul, and if it can't be the way you want me to, believe 'twill be a better way. And though love you I don't and never shall, I swear that you're more than diamonds and rubies to me all the same, and always shall be."

With that he was forced to be content. He walked with her part of the way back to Daleham, then left her and returned homeward.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW SKIPPER

THE bar of Mr. Sidebottom's tavern, *The Sailors' Joy*, was humming with voices, and the matter for the moment interesting the drinkers referred to those with whom we are acquainted.

Three men formed the centre of attraction and all were hands on Tresilion's lugger, *The Grey Bird*.

Abel Hooker was a broad, solid man of fifty, of average height, with a nautical pigtail and a genial face remarkable for its display of small-pox pits. He was terribly disfigured, but kindness shone from his scarred countenance. John Tresilion had been Abel's hero, and he had striven to imitate the vanished smuggler to the best of his power. Richard Copleston was a bullet-headed, clean-turned youth of twenty, the last to sail in *The Grey Bird*. He had a snakey, fighting head, and was indeed pugnacious. His ambitions had early tended to the prize-ring; but the battle with a Bristol light-weight that had broken his nose, split his lip, spoiled a good-looking face for ever, shattered Richard's first dreams of fame. He had returned to his native village after defeat and, when the opportunity offered, was glad to get into *The Grey Bird*. As Nicholas Tresilion's special friend and companion, he won this honour and had proved himself worthy of his fortune. The third man, Elijah Newte, was a giant and stood six feet five in his sea-boots. His face was hard and handsome, and his character uncertain, but, though still not more than five-and-thirty, few better skilled men ever helped to sail a boat, and his seamanship, won in a cod-liner off Newfoundland, in the Straits of Dover, and on an ancient "wind jammer" that coasted round the Horn,

excelled anything that Daleham could show. His record was bad, and John Tresilion liked him little ; yet since the day that he picked the giant up destitute on a French quay and gave him his passage home, Newte had stopped on the boat. He knew the French coast well, was a good pilot, and had knowledge of the French language ; but once he found his feet, Elijah proved grasping, and it needed a man of character, like his late master, to keep him in his place.

Concerning Nicholas Tresilion the trio now spoke, and since only friends frequented that house, and Mr. Sidebottom himself could not be considered unfriendly, though he declined all dealings with the free-traders of Daleham, none made any attempt to hide his meaning.

"Monk Karswill will be captain now," declared Elijah Newte. "He was Tresilion's mate for ten year, and knows the business and the people as well as the old man did. Mark me, he'll sail the boat for Mrs. Tresilion and things will go on as usual, except he'll have a bigger share ; and so will therest of us, I reckon. We've got to strike for it together, and she can't say 'no.'"

"You're talking foolishness, Elijah," answered the ex-prizefighter. You seem to forget John Tresilion had a son and that *The Grey Bird* belongs to him now. D'you think Nicholas would sail second in his own boat ? He'll be skipper and take his father's place."

"Not him. His mother's got too much sense for that. What 'does he know—a young boy like him ? He's only been to France four times in his life and can't sling the lingo any better than you can."

"I'll bet you half my share on the next run that Nicholas is skipper," declared Richard Copleston. "What d'you say, Hooker ?"

But Hooker had no ideas.

"It will happen as it must," he answered. "I'm only wishful that the crew's money be tightened up a bit."

"If you're after Nick's sister, I should think 'twould pay you better to side with him, as I do," said Copleston to Newte a moment later, and the other admitted that.

"I'm not against Nicholas Tresilion, and I'm ready enough to keep in the boat, if I'm treated right," he said. "But there's the old woman to deal with, and he'll never do anything she don't approve. He's just as much under her thumb as if he was an unbreeched baby."

Mr. Tom Otter, Doctor Baldwin's man, had entered and now took part in the argument.

"Her will is law," he said, "and her will is that her son be skipper. I had it from Nick himself two days after we buried the old un. He knows the work, and he'll soon pick up the language. What is there a smuggler can't pick up for that matter?"

"There's only Monk Karswill who will make any splutter about it then if you don't, Elijah Newte," declared Abel Hooker. "For my custom is to shout with the loudest always. 'Tis the best course for a sailor man like me. I only ask to do my work and get my money. We shan't be going across for a bit I reckon."

"More fools you then," answered the huntsman. "Now's the appointed time and now's the day of salvation, if you ax me. For why? The gauger's dead and buried, and they haven't sent a new one yet, and knowing how the Lords of the Sea work, you may take your davy they won't do anything for a month or more. If I was Nicholas, I'd soon be on another run. When do you clear?"

"To-night," said Newte. "And by the same token there's a runlet for his Reverence. You'd best be at the rectory gate—the back one in the lane—afore cock light, Tom. The same old place."

Mr. Otter nodded.

"Have no fear," he said, "I'll be there."

Then Mr. Sidebottom, who served in his shirt sleeves and a barras apron behind the bar, spoke.

"I hope you chaps will find the new master take a higher line and drop these doubtful ways," he said. "I've no axe to grind as you know and no quarrel with anybody; but it will pay Nicholas better to bow to the laws of the land and catch fish like an honest man in future."

" You know better, my old bird," answered Tom Otter. " You know, exactly as well as the best of us, how well it pays to catch fish like an honest man."

" Smuggling deprives the country of a proper source of revenue and puts the fair trader at a great disadvantage," declared the inn-keeper. " Mind I'm not preaching to you chaps, or meddling in your business ; I'm only saying that it isn't patriotic."

" Free trade's the only fair trade," answered Newte. " And who cares for the law so long as he can keep out of its clutches ? It ban't made to help and support the likes of us. 'Tis made so we should be trampled upon, and kept down, and kept ignorant, and kept poor, and kept all the things the rich take very good care to escape from."

" That's right," echoed Hooker. " That's sense, and I'll never confuse man-made laws and heavenly ordinances. I'm a very sober-minded, religious man and always the first to go to church of a morning when I'm ashore, and always the last to leave it. The Almighty don't have no truck with the Customs and He ain't on the side of the State."

" More He ain't for sure," argued Copleston, " else He'd never have let smuggler Tresilion do for exciseman Lees."

" You can't argue nothing from that," said Mr. Sidebottom. " You can't say what that means, Richard ; because both men died. And that looks to me pretty much as though the Lord, Who has doubtless been watching these chaps pretty close for many a year, felt 'twas six of the one and half a dozen of the other. So He let 'em both go, and felt they were destructive forces that had best be suffered to destroy each other."

" The State's the smuggler if you ax me," asserted Hooker. " You can't call your soul your own nowadays, and now the wars are over, they'll come down upon us again, like the sharks they are, and leave us little more than the skin on our backs."

" There's no doubt," admitted Sidebottom, " that Drake and Hawkins and such like heroes did as much and nothing said ; but the times have changed and

we must look to the Law and help the world to keep the Law ; for break it and 'twill surely break you in the long run. And, as a deep thinker, I may tell you men that to break the Law week in and week out, as you do, is a very bad thing for your morals and the morals of the next generation."

"I think 'tis a very good thing and keeps a man's self-respect," said Copleston. "If Newte and me and Hooker and Monk Karswill, not to name Nicholas himself—if we didn't break these here laws pretty regular and take our lives in our hands like men, we should all soon grow ashamed of ourselves and creep about so meek as Tom Otter's hounds, when they ain't hunting. Shouldn't we, Newte ? "

"So we should," assented the giant. "'Tis like your poetry, inn-keeper. You'd soon droop if you wasn't making rhymes, and well you know it."

"You mustn't compare great things and small," replied Mr. Sidebottom. "Poetry's a fine art and smuggling—"

"Smuggling's a craft," said Newte. "But 'tis us that do and suffer and make the stuff for you to sing about. And we're the great people. We tell the stories ; you only string 'em into rhymes. 'Tis the diver you want to fetch up the pearls—any fool can string 'em and polish 'em when they're brought up out of the deep sea."

"Aye—and any fool can wear 'em for that matter ; but it often takes a clever man to pay for 'em," said the inn-keeper. "And that reminds me. They say how old Toby Palk have given that daughter of Monk Karswill's a gold brooch. Courting her as bold as a regiment of soldiers, and her but twenty-three and him nearer seventy than sixty ! "

"The old will break out like that," declared Abel Hooker. "'Tis the second sap rising in 'em—more shame to 'em no doubt. But they can't help it, and the women are oft to blame. I've known a girl draw on an old man something shameful—for his money of course."

"Did you ever hear the tale of the stone barge ? "

asked Tom Otter, of Newte. "Now that would have made a very good ballet for inn-keeper and be a great strain on his cleverness to tell again in verses. And 'tis true, for his Reverence told me the tale. 'Twas about a stone boat coming round from the limestone quarries a bit ago and finding one of the smuggler's rafts with who knows how many kegs of brandy anchored to it. They took it in tow and reported their find when they made harbour. They were great heroes and the preventive men promised a rich reward, though ten kegs of brandy was all they seemed to have found. Everything went well till one of the preventives, falling thirsty afore he left the stone barge, went down below to the water barrel for a drink afore anybody could stop him, and though what he drew was colourless, like all smuggled brandy or other spirits, it weren't tasteless by no means. In fact those brave fellows had filled their water butt to bursting with fine liquor, and while they'd helped themselves to fifty kegs, were doing the virtuous and reporting those they didn't want. Government's damned spiteful over a little thing like that—can't see a joke, let alone take one. They broke up that stone boat—broke her up as if she was a wreck."

"And many and many another rare boat they've broke up and made a bonfire of," declared Abel Hooker. "And no doubt the angels have wept to see it done."

"Take care they don't do the same for *The Grey Bird*," warned Mr. Sidebottom, "and as for my poetry, it don't deal with vulgar things like that, as Tom here knows very well. I'm for serious subjects, and unless a man's got a bit of brain above smuggling, he'll have no nourishment out of my verses. Tragedy's the hardest flight of all, and, as I like to aim high, I'd sooner be on some dreadful theme than any light matter."

"If breaking up thicky stone boat weren't tragedy, what was it?" asked Copleston.

"A tragedy is such a thing as the death of Tresilion," answered Sidebottom. "'Tis woeful catastrophes like that fire me into my stride. And I wrote it flaming from the heart the night after we found him. And Widow Tresilion sent me a special message by Nicholas

that she'd drawed so much comfort out of it as a weasel draws from a turkey's egg."

"There's no time to listen now," said Newte, whose one objection to *The Sailors' Joy* was the poetry that guests were occasionally invited to hear; but on so great a subject the others cried him down.

"We ought to hear it," declared Copleston, "seeing he was our skipper. And we ain't due at Hordell's till midnight."

A poem usually meant a round of free drinks, otherwise Mr. Sidebottom's audiences had been smaller than was the case.

He filled their glasses and called through a door which opened behind the counter.

"Sophia! Bring in the Volume, will 'e?"

By the "Volume" the poet meant a manuscript book of large dimensions sacred to his Muse. Two of these books were completely full and enshrined amid the Sidebottom archives by a worshipping wife; the third was about half written. His verses were seldom very lengthy, and for the most part, as he declared, they dealt with solemn subjects. He liked a funeral better than a wedding and a murder better than either.

Mr. Sidebottom took the "Volume" from his wife, who acted as acolyte on these occasions; then he adjusted his glasses—a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles that belonged to his father and were merely used for effect—and began to read. In this exercise he adopted a solemn and sepulchral tone entirely different from that which he employed for any other purpose.

"THE DEATH OF JOHN TRESILION."

"Upon the cliffs to hunt a fox
A gallant field was got,
And hard they'd ridden from afar;
The pace was pretty hot.
But soon of reynard and the hounds
They thought no more at all
For they beheld a fearful sight
Which did them much appal;
Fast bound in the cold grip of Death
The bold Tresilion lay

With Albert Lees, his enemy
For many and many a day.
Poor John's neck bone was broke in two
And Albert's ribs were split,
So never more they'll sing their songs
Or try a bout of wit.
They're gone, as dead men have to go,
And lie in churchyard mould,
Where anger cannot come no more
And passion soon grows cold.
Their taking off was terrible,
A lesson it should be
For all good Christian men to live
In peace and charity."

Tom Otter sniffed.

"Not one of your highest flights," he said. "In fact hardly worthy of the occasion in my opinion. To begin with, it don't tell us nothing we don't know already, and what the blazes be the good of poetry, or prose either, if it don't tell us nothing we don't know?"

"You shut your mouth, you grey rat," cried Mrs. Sidebottom. "Good God Almighty! you to be talking about poetry to my master!"

"Sorry," answered Tom, winking behind his hand at the inn-keeper. "No doubt 'tis beyond my bird's brains to see how fine it is; but I always call home your husband's great efforts, when Miser Hobbs hung himself with a rope he borrowed from the marine store. That was a grander thing than this and full of morals."

The crew of *The Grey Bird* made no comment on the poem. They emptied their glasses and passed away into the darkness. Then they separated for safety, to meet again at the ruin of Hordell's Hall. But to-night the business of getting off John Tresilion's last cargo occasioned no uneasiness. The coast-guard system had been for a moment disorganized, and Newte, Hooker and Copleston proceeded fearlessly to the work that awaited them in the ruin.

Others were already there, and they found Nicholas Tresilion himself and Monk Karswill, mate of *The Grey Bird*, at work. The kegs and cases, over which Nicholas was keeping watch when the hunted fox thrust in upon him, were now carried one by one from the cellar

and borne where a lantern hung on the bough of a tree without. Beneath it stood two tilt carts and three men. Of these, Ned Cawdle, from Appleby's, was one, while with him a silent figure in black did clerk's work and ticked off the contraband as it was packed on the wagons. The third man was old and wore a long white beard, a venerable beaver hat and a red scarf round his neck. Abednego Egg, coffin maker, was held by Doctor Baldwin to be the wickedest man in Daleham, and when the ancient ruffian heard this criticism, it gave him hearty pleasure. "Bad Egg," as he was simply called by all who knew him, numbered many sins, but it was age and not crime that had bent his back and brought his beard to reach his thighs. He went about like a beetle and worked by night. He was famed for charms and for knowledge that had once earned him a bad half hour in Daleham duck-pond. He "overlooked" honest people and brought evil to their cattle and crops. It was believed that the Evil One helped Mr. Egg and that the successful villainies to his credit were the result of infernal assistance. Traditions had gathered about him, and a very bad old man was now grown to the dimensions of a romantic and sinister personality brooding over Daleham and doing evil far beyond the region where he dwelt. He worked his best to foster this notoriety and was aware that the village felt uneasily proud of him. He traded on his fame and left no stone unturned to wrap himself in a garment of mystery and darkness.

He had been a wrecker, and he had done many vile deeds; but his powers waned, for he was nearly eighty years old, though still tough and well preserved. He hoped to put in a century of sin before the end, and it was one of his great grievances that Mr. Sidebottom had never yet made a rhyme about him.

Now Bad Egg drove one cart and Cawdle drove the other. They were bound for a hostelry twenty miles away outside Plymouth; and once safely housed in that den, the goods would pass to the town as opportunity offered.

While the men worked, Copleston turned aside with

Nicholas and told him of the conversation at *The Sailors' Joy*.

"Newte vows that you and your mother will make Karswill captain," he said, "but I withstood the man and told him that you wouldn't be under orders on your own boat."

The other laughed.

"Father used to say that he who wants trouble must get to be a ship-master, or marry a wife," he answered. "And he knew. A wife can be escaped, Richard, a ship cannot. I'm skipper of *The Grey Bird* now, and after we've cleaned up on this haul, they've got to know it. I've talked all out with mother, for I guess what's in Monk's thoughts; but it can't be. Mother said I was my father's son, and that if I shirked she'd flog me and turn me out of the house."

The work was done and Monk Karswill, a man of few words, presently told Tresilion that the goods had been safely stowed.

"'Tis after one o'clock," he said. "They'd better get on their way."

The little black clerk hopped up beside Mr. Cawdle, and his wagon, with two horses harnessed therein, set the way, while behind it followed a second driven by the venerable Egg. They passed into the darkness and the noise of them ceased; but, at the bend of a lane behind the Rectory House, Ned Cawdle stopped, alighted and transferred a keg of spirits from the wagon to a hole in the hedge.

"Tom Otter will be out for it when the dawn breaks," he told his companion. "His Reverence keeps a very open mind about free trading, and long may he do so."

CHAPTER V

MONK KARSWILL STOPS

DALEHAM BAY was flung out in a noble, double circle, like a Cupid's bow, of which the village, where sleepy Dale flowed into the sea, was the handle. Thence the cliffs swept due east and west, and crowning either point of the bay, perched in both cases on a lofty precipice, was the work of man. A ruin dominated each height, but while Hordell's Hall to the east dated from ancient times, the architecture spread upon the west cliff had sprung up but yesterday, only to remain for ever incomplete. Panic terror was responsible for the long lines of fortification, the moats and drawbridges, the battlements pierced for cannon, the shot-proof chambers and lines planned for a garrison ; but when the threatening shadow had withdrawn and fear of Napoleonic invasion subsided, the fortress on Daleham head was left unfinished as another memorial to the Man of Destiny.

Of a different character and story was the withered and crumbling pile that still marked the bygone home of the Hordells. Concerning that, a pleasant historian has a picture in his Book of Worthies, and there you may read how once it was " a sightly seat, for receipt spacious, for cost sumptuous, for situation salubrious ; near the sea upon an advanced ground with all the houses of office under it, having a delightsome prospect of both sea and land ; round which lay a noble park, well stocked with fallow deer, whose reflection, as they were grazing, might be seen in the marble clavels, thro' the casements of the chamber windows. In the dining-room was a rich and curious chimney-piece, valued at no less than £500,

containing the representation of two armies, drawn up in battalia all in polished marble, done after the life with such exactness that nothing can exceed it ; the very nails in the horse-shoes are not omitted——”

Anon the historian proceeds after this fashion to an object of our special interest.

“ Omitting other curiosities which might be insisted on, there formerly (whatever now) might you have beheld a large and profitable pond, strongly walled and gated ; which gate upon the flood opened itself and the tyde stored it in its season, with sea fish of divers sorts, as bass, mullet, soal, salmon, plaise, and the like ; and the ebb would of its own accord shut the gate upon them again, and keep them all in for the service of the house : a very profitable as well as an ingenious contrivance.”

Thus the old chronicler ; and so indeed had John Tresilion and his friends found it, for by the subterranean way from this old stew-pond, they had conveyed many hundred tons of liquor, tobacco and other contraband to the ruin above. In old time it had been known as Hordell’s Haw or Hoe, but now the old word was corrupted to “ Hall,” and the height on which the ruin stood, in its ragged skirt of perishing timber, was known as Hordell’s Head. From here, as crow might fly, to the other promontory and the fortress, was a matter of ten miles, while between the twain, jutting out from the limestone crags of Daleham Head, at a distance of a mile from the mainland easterly, stretched the Devil’s Teeth —an evil reef that extended its fangs across the entrance of the bay and presented an eternal peril to shipping. Half a dozen of the rocks never sank under sea ; but a score more were awash at high tide, and when a south-easter or south-wester blew, the chart of them might easily be read from shore by the mad whirl of white water which churned and beat there, and by the spouts of foam which leapt perpendicularly into the air where the green waves broke full on the rocks, or the light-house. For a light-house existed, and the chief light-keeper was a man of some note at Daleham.

As for the village, it spread irregularly upon the cliffs and sank to the little harbour below. Dale took her

course through the midst, and near her mouth arose the church tower. A harbour thrust out one protecting arm, crooked like a man's elbow, and here in foul weather, or at their moorings outside under ordinary conditions, the little Daleham trawlers rode. A ledge as high as a man's breast ran along the quay to sea-ward, and the blue limestone of which the parapet was composed had been polished by generations of arms ; for there the fishermen thronged. It was their rialto where they met, smoked and set their world right with much talking.

Nicholas Tresilion and Richard Copleston sauntered here now with other men, for it was Saturday ; the boats had mostly come in and would not go to sea before flood tide on the following Monday. A few belated vessels with red tanned sails came tumbling home on a rising breeze, and since it was seen ashore that the wind freshened fast, there was stir and bustle of dinghies, where men went to the moorings, that they might bring in their vessels for shelter against a possible gale.

"Foul weather's coming," said Nick. "There's a storm over-due. My father always said that the first month of the year was the toll month for Daleham."

"Have you had it out with Monk ?" asked the other.

"No ; but it's got to come and quickly now. I go to sea in ten days—not over the water, but 'round land,' to the North Channel. Battersby and the men that got home at noon in *The Provider* have been up there and done wonderful well. Here's company !"

As he spoke some riders clattered down the cobbled street of Daleham that opened on the harbour. They were Selina and Jennie Glanvil with a couple of young men in attendance. They stopped and asked a question of a fisherman, who did not answer, but pointed where Nicholas stood. Then the cavalcade proceeded, and soon Jennie Glanvil greeted young Tresilion.

"How fare you, Master Nicholas ? Alas ! I knew you by the black band on your jersey. Is your mother well ?"

Nicholas touched his hat and stood by the girl's cob.

"Thank you for asking, miss. She's not the sort to

show trouble. But it has been a cruel loss, and time only will make it better for us. Mother's all right so long as she's talking of father. She grows dumpish about all else. A great power and strength to hide her heart as she thinks ; but it will out, for her tongue's ever telling where her heart is."

" When can I and my sister come and see her again ? She frightens us, you know ; but girls like to be frightened. Men seem as tame as cock-sparrows after we've heard your fierce old mother talk."

Nicholas laughed.

" You're always welcome as the flowers, miss ; and she's terrible proud when Sir Simeon looks in upon her ; but of course 'tis more than she can expect him to come but once in a year or so."

" He hates her pipe, Nicholas. If she would promise not to smoke, I think he would come and talk of your father."

" She won't promise to put her pipe out," he answered. " A bit ago, when she thought she was going to die, she bade father bury her pipe and a prick of tobacco with her. ' You never know your luck,' she said. ' I might get the chance to use it.' ' And will 'e want a flint and steel, my old dear ? ' asked father, keeping up the joke. ' No,' mother answered. ' I'll get a light easy enough where I'm going.' "

" She's a fearful old pagan, Nicholas. But talking of smoking, this is Mr. Oxenham, who is stopping with us, and this is Lieutenant Baldwin, and both are rare lovers of the weed and very anxious to have some of the choice bird's-eye that Doctor Baldwin smokes."

Nicholas nodded.

" It can be done," he said. " I'll tell Faith. She looks after the baccy."

They fell into general talk and Gilbert Oxenham expressed a wish to go to sea.

" I'm very anxious for a bit of fishing with you, Tresilion, and I can handle a boat. I shouldn't be in the way and would pay well for my fun," he said ; but Nicholas was doubtful.

He trusted no man.

"It might be managed I dare say, master. I don't sail yet awhile, however. We're fitting a trawl beam, for an experiment, and when I do go, 'tis likely to be for a month of Sundays. Mine's a drifter and 'tis a question if she can draw a trawl, but father meant to try, so it must be tried. There's lots of other boats will be gay and proud to take you, however."

"He doesn't want to go in them, Nicholas. He wants to go in the queen of the bay, and that's *The Grey Bird*," said Jennie Glanvil; but the young man was not to be won by flattery.

A smile crossed his face.

"If a man comes in father's boat—father's boat I call her, but she's mine now—he stops in it till he dies, miss. That's the rule—for reasons. You ask Hooker, or Copleston, or Newte, or Karswill what sort of oaths father made 'em swear afore they shipped."

The man last in his mouth came along the quay at this moment. He touched his cap to the riders and spoke to Tresilion.

"Shall you fetch her in, or let her ride?"

"Hooker and Newte are aboard," answered Tresilion.

"Well, goodbye, Nicholas, and I think you are very hard-hearted; but Mr. Oxenham will sail with you yet, he always gets his way."

"So I will," vowed Gilbert. "And you'll find me very handy too, Tresilion."

"You shall have the baccy, gentlemen," was all Nick answered. Then, when they had ridden away, he turned to Karswill.

"That fine chap wants to go sailing along with us. I like the cut of his jib, but who's t'other—the ginger one? I wouldn't trust him farther than I could smell him."

"A sojer—the doctor's neph, here to rest his bones after the wars. And I want to have a tell with you, Nick. About the boat."

"I know. You'd best come to see mother, Monk. I'm very wishful to pleasure you; but there's reason in all things."

"Will she see me?"

"Of course she'll see you. Ain't you her pet and always have been?"

They left the quay and were soon at the home of the Tresilions. It was built into an old limestone quarry half way up the cliff, enjoyed a full view of the bay and had a little garden of flowers before the door and a patch of kale behind. These things Faith tended. She stood at the door as they appeared and welcomed Karswill.

"'Tis good to see you," she said, "and mother was going to send for you if you had not come."

"I held off because I reckoned you did not want to be troubled with friends for the minute."

They entered the kitchen, where sat the bed-ridden woman in her four-poster.

"I can't go into full mourning for the blessed saint," Mrs. Tresilion had said, "because I'm dead to the earth from the waist downward; but what shows, shall mourn as never woman mourned afore."

She was as good as her word, and her enormous bust was now concealed in black satin and crêpe. A widow's cap with streamers that hung down on either side of the bed was also black; the hangings of the bed were black and the coverlet was black. On her great hands she wore half a dozen outlandish rings, and in her mouth her pipe puffed bravely. Before this remarkable spectacle came Monk Karswill, a broad, finely built man of forty-five.

"Kiss me, you toad," said Mrs. Tresilion, "and say why the devil you and your wife have stood off all these days. A bad conscience I reckon."

"Not a chance. I thought you wouldn't want us."

He kissed her and sat beside her.

"As you know," began Mrs. Tresilion, "my John's a shining angel now; but here am I, your foster-mother still. But, from what they whisper, you've lost your head these days. So let's spit out the trouble and have done with it. You want to be skipper of the boat?"

"'Tis right I should be. 'Twas your husband's custom to make me cap'n when he bided ashore."

"And what's that got to do with it, you ambidextrous

infidel!" shouted Mother Tresilion. "Because you took command when he was out of the boat, be that any cause why for you should steal his place now he's gone to glory? What's this thing here?"

She pointed to Nicholas.

"Owner," answered Mr. Karswill.

"Yes, and the son of his father, too, and the son of his mother also, you yellow-bellied lizard! You—you, a workhouse boy saved from the plough by my dead saint, to dare! To dare to think that a Tresilion would serve in his own boat under you! Why, is it the end of the world? The ingratitude! You ought to be proud to sail along with any child of John Tresilion's getting. Faithful unto death you ought to be, you cat-handed wood-louse!"

"I'll be faithful and you know it. I'm not one to forget what your husband did for me, or what you did for me either. But Nicholas is little more than a boy and I'm a man. He sailed under me before and why not again? 'Tis a very tricky trade and I reckon he don't know enough about it yet to command us."

"He knows all about it. Was he at his father's right hand for nought? Didn't you say yourself that night coming out of Calais, when my saint was three sheets in the wind, for the first and last time in his life, along of toothache, that Nicholas was a marvel of marvels and a chip of the old block? Did you, or not?"

"Yes; but, Mother Tresilion—"

"I won't be your mother another day, Monk. You can go and ask that old bitch fox-hound 'Susan' to be your mother. You're a hookem-snivy, trundle-tailed king-crab in my opinion. So come here and kiss me again, and let's hear no more about it."

But Monk Karswill was used to this sort of thing. He listened patiently while she thundered on.

"You belong to me, body and soul, and you belong to *The Grey Bird* just as much as her lug do. And though my saint has gone aloft, where you'll never go, he's not forgot one of you thankless caterpillars, that sailed with him and turned his hair grey. Last night—you listen to this—last night, between one and two of the clock

while I lay waking and wondering how many angels it would take to carry me to my eternal reward when the time came, John Tresilion stood by my bed in all his flame new clothes and a glory shone around ! He'd come with his last will and testament and he'd not forgotten one of you—not one. Each man jack shall hear in my good time what it is to be, but for you he'd thought first and above the others, seeing you were mate ; and mate you're still to be, Monk Karswill ; but instead of Nicholas having the same share as his father did, my holy saint have planned for you to have two more shares ; and if that's not enough for such a thankless, grasping, lop-sided sausage of a man as you, then you can go and sink yourself in the bottom of the Bay of Biscay and stop there till the devil calls for his own ! ”

Mother Tresilion blew a mighty cloud of smoke from her mouth and Karswill, much impressed with the improvement in his position, thanked her warmly.

“ Of course that alters everything,” he said. “ And if you and Nick can see your way to that, out of kindness to me and my wife and family, then I'll do my part and you shan't regret it. 'Tis terrible handsome I'm sure, and we can't sail to France too soon for me.”

“ You'll sail for fish, not France,” declared Nicholas. “ Time enough for that in March, or later. After this terrible come-along-of-it with my father, the quieter we keep for a bit, the better. I look to you to let me have the use of your brains as well as my own in future, Monk, for I'm a poor thing beside my father. But be it as 'twill, you and me will do the best we can.”

“ Are you going round land yourself, or do you send the boat with me ? ” asked Karswill, and he was told that the skipper intended to sail.

“ Get the hollands, Faith,” commanded her mother. “ I'll have three fingers with these young tom tabbies, and then they can get going about their business. And mind you say your prayers to-night, Monk, and thank the master as came all the way down from his eternal home, with a golden crown on his head and all—just for the sake of a lot of worthless carrion that would be better manuring potatoes than eating 'em ! ”

The mate and skipper departed presently and Karswill thanked young Tresilion again.

" 'Tis mother's plan, Monk, and I've no fault to find against it," he said. " Things will be the same and the taking will be divided just as before—fourteen shares and me seven of 'em ; but you'll have two of my seven—that's five shares altogether for me and four for you ; three for Newte and one each for t'others."

" That won't suit Elijah Newte," declared Karswill. He's a very ambitious man and thinks he's worth us all put together."

" I've no quarrel with him and hope he'll have none with me," answered the other. " He's got to take it and lucky to get it. If I have you and Copleston on my side, that's enough for me."

" Newte reckons that he's got your sister on his side," said Monk, and Nicholas laughed.

" There's better than him after her," he answered. " She'll surprise us yet, but she don't want Goliath of Gath."

" She likes the big men, however."

" I don't know what she likes," replied Faith's brother, " but I know she'll be as useful to me as she was to father, and I hope the man that wins her won't show his nose in Daleham for another ten years at the earliest."

CHAPTER VI

NOT "YES"; NOT "NO"

DOCTOR BALDWIN, with his nephew the soldier, and his niece, Honoreine, were walking to drink tea at Tudor Towers.

There had come a bitter disappointment to Warner Baldwin and a decease, from which he had hoped great things, had made no difference to his position. An aunt of his mother was dead, but the expected legacy came not, and now the young man, taking his trouble ill, railed against unkind fate and blamed the vanished lady, rather than his own indifference and inconsiderate attitude to her while she lived.

Honoreine, who disliked her cousin reminded him of this.

" You should have cultivated her to better purpose, Warner," she said.

" Why should I? Would you have me there licking her shoon? Justice was all I asked, or wanted, but I had a right to that."

" One must not accuse Dame Warner or injustice," declared Doctor Baldwin. " You were not her heir, but merely possessed a like relationship with several others. If the rest, as it would appear, studied to please her better, she must not be blamed for recognizing the fact under her will."

" So much for my hopes," answered the young man. " Doubtless you will side against me. It is the way to shout on the side of the victors. But I now stand without a solitary chance of inheriting in any quarter. I must be a poverty-stricken wretch to my dying day."

" And what then, nephew? Better men than you have gone to their honoured graves poor in this world's

goods, and a soldier should be like a parson in that: one does not consecrate oneself to one's country to make money. Justify your existence and show the courage proper to youth. Be less craven-hearted. Let the poor man be neither soured nor envious of his more fortunate neighbour, but recollect that every state to which God may call him has its compensations and can be pursued with credit and honour. Take what life offers and do not grumble for ever and poison the little you have by considering that hundreds have more. Think upon the thousands who have less. Let a man above all things be rational and sane in his work and play. If you can't ride to hounds, thank God that you have good legs and can run with them; if you cannot shoot pheasants, be glad to have sport with the rabbits; if chicken and champagne is denied you, reflect that bread and cheese and cider are just as welcome to your stomach, whatever your tongue may say about it. Set your hopes higher, and let this misfortune sting you to a more serious and earnest attitude. Rely upon yourself and seek to educate yourself and enlarge your mind. When I hear men mourning that they have no money, I pity them; because that regret usually shows they have no brains either. That indeed is a serious disability. But you have brains and should know that the golden way is easier to follow if you are a poor man than if you are a rich one."

"And what is the golden way, Uncle Upcott?" inquired Honorine.

"The way distasteful to all young things," he answered, "for the young are ever in extremes. Nature tempts them to excess, and in the pride of their youth and strength they fall. But the golden way lies along a safe path and leads us above the precipice of satiety. Always stop short before you have had enough; always break off while still a desire remains to go on. In eating and drinking, desist while still hungry and thirsty; in reading, stop while you are still interested in your author; in sport, draw the charge of your gun or wind up your line while still a favourite cover remains to be shot or a pool to fish. Rise from your bed while it continues to possess attractions, and so forth. Numberless in-

stances will occur to each of us culled from the circumstances of our own lives."

"Does it refer to preaching, Uncle?" asked Honorine, and the doctor, falling into the trap, assured her that it did.

"How thankful Daleham ought to be!" she said.

"Rude puss! But have a care. I begin to suspect I deny myself too much in that particular. An hour is all too short a time, and I may extend my Sunday sermons."

"Pray don't, best of uncles," she begged, "or you will drive away many just persons from the fold. Perhaps, even, you may make mother become a Catholic, as father would have had her be; and when that happens, I shall go to Rome also—like my brother."

"Paul is nothing," declared Doctor Baldwin. "It is all very well for him to call himself a member of the Romanish persuasion; but in reality he belongs to no church. I wish he did."

"He goes to service at Plymouth," declared Honorine, but her uncle doubted.

"He goes to Plymouth, and he goes elsewhere; but, in all charity, I cannot think that he takes religion seriously. He is very mysterious, hides his life from me and has no wish that I should throw light upon his difficulties."

"He is mysterious," admitted Paul's sister. "We know little more about him than you do, uncle. Mother thinks that he is in close touch with our kinsman, Nicholas, in Paris."

The doctor frowned.

"Marshal Soult is a great soldier," he said, "but I begin to have my doubts if he is a great man. When I learned after Napoleon's abdication, that Soult declared himself a royalist, received the Order of St. Louis and became minister of war to the Bourbon, I was much cast down. So rats desert a sinking ship."

But Warner Baldwin argued otherwise and approved the marshal's conduct.

Honorine surprised them both.

"Of course we know nothing and Paul tells us no-

thing; but there is little doubt that his great kinsman was pleased with Paul. He would use his authority to give Paul office to-morrow; but Paul is for Bonaparte, heart and soul, so you might think that Nicholas Soult would turn his back upon him. Instead, he is in frequent communication. Packets come, whence and how we know not. But come they do, and mother and I argue from that, that at heart Marshal Soult is no Bourbon, but plotting with his old master in secret. And mother grows fearful of the future, for no power on earth will keep my brother out of France if Napoleon makes head again."

" You imply a terrible possibility," said her uncle, " and for my part I hope very heartily that Europe has heard the last of that fearful spirit. Would that Paul could be got to fasten upon reality as displayed round about him, in his mother's estates and the requirements of the people."

" He is in love, at any rate," declared Warner Baldwin. " He can find time for philandering with a smuggler's sister."

" We must talk no more of smugglers," answered the doctor. " I hope that these things will cease out of our midst, and that with the passing of the protagonists we shall for ever escape a very difficult and thorny question. Indeed common sense, of which young Tresilion possesses his share, will, I suspect, lead him to abandon his dead father's lawless habits. The State has had its attention drawn very sharply to our troubles by the death of Lees, and I learn, on the authority of Sir Simeon himself, that the people at Plymouth have sent one of their most trustworthy and unsleeping watch-dogs to reorganize our coastguard system. Robert Pawlet is his name, and I trust that he comes to find friends rather than enemies."

They reached Tudor Towers—a mansion of Elizabethan date, built in the shape of the letter E and facing south. The company included a dozen from the country side, but for those days it proved not an entertainment of great formality. Sir Simeon Glanvil was a widower but contemplated a second alliance, and the lady, by

good chance popular with her future step-daughters, had driven from Westmouth in a carriage with outriders. She was Dame Mercy Gee, a judge's widow of good substance and long descent.

Music formed the staple of the entertainment, and once again Warner Baldwin had reason secretly to regret his own disabilities. For nearly all the young members of the company contributed to the entertainment save himself. Selina and Jennie warbled duets of the period ; the judge's widow, who was no more than fifty and young for her age, sang in Italian, and Honorine gave the company a dainty song or two from the troubadours. Then the men were challenged, and Sir Simeon himself, not to be outdone by his lady, ventured on a hunting stave, while Doctor Baldwin, Gilbert Oxenham and others joined in the chorus. They bade the soldier sing, but he could not, and Oxenham obliged with flagrant love-songs as melancholy as they were chaste. He had long been cudgelling his wits how to use this occasion to the best purpose, and presently manœuvred to Honorine's side and enjoyed some speech with her as a prelude to more.

He knew that her brother was the girl's first thought and guessed the subject would interest her most.

" You are like him," she said. " You talk so wisely—oh, there is none who talks more wisely than Paul ; but acts and deeds are different. Let my brother be in his most amiable and soberest mood and in a moment he will burst all bounds and foam at the mouth if Napoleon's name be mentioned."

" You are for Napoleon too ? "

" Yes, heart and soul ; but I do not foam at the mouth about him. You are such children—you and Paul. Consider, for instance, why you are here in this house."

" I know. I was sent to fall in love with Selina, or Jennie, and we all quarrel like cats and are splendid friends. I feel as if they were my sisters and I had known them all their lives. Selina likes somebody else and, so far as I am concerned, Jennie will die a spinster. We should scratch each other's eyes out. She's ador-

able and as clever a girl as any in the world—save one. Again she must certainly marry a sort of man to play buffer to her impetuosity, and I am impetuous too."

Honorine considered this speech and looked up from under her eyelids at the youth who uttered it.

"Is it true that you are a convert to Paul's opinions?" she asked.

"Yes," he declared. "Paul, however, would not have convinced me. It is you who have done so."

"What nonsense!"

"Indeed no. I am free to think and act as I please. I hold no commission and am under no compulsion to work for one country more than another. You little know the power of your logic. It is crushing—especially to a free spirit like myself. It is the pirate blood in me, mademoiselle. I come of a noble race of freebooters and have no patriotism for my own country."

"How if I despise you for that?"

"You will not. Remember America. Is not America enough? We have lost her deservedly. When the mother sinks to base courses, who shall blame her daughters for flying away from her? I am not proud of England."

"The country is not its rulers. Because the men in power made a vile use of that power and sought to be tyrants to the new world and paid the penalty of their selfish wickedness and folly, is that to blame England?"

"I am not in love with England I assure you; I have only eyes for France."

"Then Paul has a dangerous ally," she answered, "and your place under Sir Simeon's roof is threatened."

"I shall do nothing that does not become a gentleman. Sir Simeon has no virulent hatred against the French. He merely holds them our natural enemies, and doubts not that we shall be at each other's throats again, when our nations are rested."

"If that happens, what will you do?"

"Who can tell? Meantime to something nearer. Did you plead with Tresilion for me?"

"I asked his sister, my friend, Faith. But she felt little hope. There is some difficulty in the boat I fancy."

One of the crew wants to leave her ; but probably he knows too much and they will not let him go if they can help it. In any case, I imagine you do not want to become a permanent hand of that doubtful lugger, *The Grey Bird* ? ”

“ It depends on her work. I can imagine a worse business. I am lazy and worthless ; but things have happened to me that make me want to be energetic and useful.”

“ Smugglers are energetic enough. But are they useful, and would an Oxenham sink to running brandy and tobacco ? ”

“ No,” he said ; “ but consider if *The Grey Bird* was engaged in greater contraband—the contraband of brains. Consider if we could rise to some international purpose and help to bring your hero back to the throne of France ! ”

“ You are past praying for,” she declared, but none the less she liked him better than she had liked him before. He had imagination, and that was precious to Honorine.

Talk became general ; the light failed and wax candles were brought in. Dame Mercy Gee began to fear the hour was late.

“ The gentlemen of the road will be on the wing before I get home,” she declared. “ If I stay longer I shall have to carry away one of these young blades to protect me.”

“ The notorious Fagg and Blackadder are reported on Dartmoor,” answered Doctor Baldwin. “ Since Turpin, I think no highwaymen have won to such fame. Their escapades are infamous and they laugh at every attempt to take them.”

“ Why do not some of you idle young men set about the rascals ? ” inquired Sir Simeon. “ If Lieutenant Baldwin is irked by these piping times of peace, let him organize and lead a band of stout fellows to smoke out this pair of hornets. And let Paul Deschamps assist him ; and Gilbert here.”

“ I fear Master Oxenham has too much sympathy with the lawless and the lawbreakers,” declared Selina Glanvil. “ So do all who breathe the air of Daleham. It

comes up from the salt sea to the young men's nostrils."

"I will inquire of my cousin, the head of our house at Tawton," said Oxenham. "He dwells under that mighty mound of earth called Cosdonne Beacon, that marks a limit to the Moor on the north-east. If he thinks that it is our place to take the rascals, I warrant we'd quickly ride them down."

"You would sooner look in a lady's eyes than a highwayman's," declared Honoree, and the youth admitted it.

"Who would not, mademoiselle? A glimpse of heaven is better than a sight of hell; but if duty called

"Your hero is a highwayman come to that," said Warner Baldwin, who had been spending a dull hour with a dull squire's wife. "What does Sir Simeon think of harbouring a Napoleon's man beneath his roof?"

The baronet laughed.

"I am not uneasy, lieutenant. If Bonaparte ever leaves Elba, which God forbid, Gilbert here will not be found on the side of England's enemy."

"And if he were, the advantage would lie with us," declared Jennie, "for Gilbert would be better against us than for us."

Sir Simeon's betrothed departed ere long and Oxenham seized the opportunity of a general movement to convey Honoree to the conservatory—a large glass house filled with flowers thought choice a hundred years ago.

"A rare and wondrous thing—the first piece in Devon, Sir Simeon tells me," he said. "It comes from Peru, or some such outlandish place, and is called a Fuchsia, after Leonard Fuchs, a great German botanist of the past." And while Honoree admired the modest red and purple flower, now so common and a hardy dweller in a thousand gardens of the West County, Gilbert closed the door, then drew her forward till they were lost to sight from the drawing-room. A moment later, to her undying amazement, the lady heard herself begged in marriage.

"Mademoiselle!" he burst out, while Honoree was smelling first this blossom and then that, to find which

were fragrant. "Mademoiselle Deschamps, it is now six weeks that I have known you!"

"And what then, Master Oxenham?"

"Then surely to God it follows that only one thing can have overtaken me! I worship you—the ground under your feet is sacred to me—the chair you sit on is sacred, and the cup you drink from and the horse you ride and—"

"Take breath, or you will hurt yourself. Was there ever such a gallant gentleman?"

"Don't laugh at me. I love you. I am in heaven, Honoreine, when I am near you; but it is all night and darkness when you are not here. I do not dare to ask you to be my wife—such an unworthy nobody as I; but I do dare to ask you to let me hope that I may be worthy some day."

"That is a most modest attitude. Nobody has ever put it like that before."

"Again you laugh," he complained. "But I am in earnest. For you the least of men might rise to heroism and the greatest become still greater. You would be an inspiration, a banner of flame, a light in the darkness. I worship you, but humbly. Is it impossible, inconceivable? Am I too late? Obviously it must be so, for a thousand men have knelt at such a shrine before to-day."

"I am sorry to disappoint you, but the number is no more than five."

"Then the world is blind. But five—I wish I had them at my sword point!"

"I am not sure of that. One was a great artist with the sword. He could make his blade play round him until it seemed that he was cased in a glittering cone of transparent steel."

"Alas! you love him, mademoiselle."

"Nay, sir. I am heart-whole yet, and likely to remain so. Now we must return, or they will seek me."

"You are most adorable," he said; "but since there is none of the six happier than another—for there are six now, mademoiselle, then I implore you to command me on some enterprise. Fill my cup of hope to the brim and

bid me do some great feat for you. Set me a task, if it be only a dog's—to fetch and carry. You do not love me—indeed how should you? But you do not hate me; you suffer me to have the unutterable privilege of knowing that you wish me well?"

"Why not, sir? Of course I wish you well. You are my brother's friend. It is enough."

"And you will think upon a task," he implored. "Be it great or small, I will do it, if it cost me my life."

"Bold words, m'sieu. But I will think what you shall do. Be not too hopeful, however. I shall not waste my wits or your time with a child's plan. If I cannot hit on a worthy ordeal, then I shall leave your invitation alone."

"I do not fear that," he answered. "You will find me man's work, the doing of which will increase your happiness. And set me no trivial deed, but let me measure your belief in me by the magnitude and gravity of the task."

She laughed at that.

"Indeed you must draw no conclusions," she answered, "and if you are going to read deeper meanings into my commission than I put into it, we will not play this pleasant game. I may be content merely to bid you swallow a cake or drink a cup of tea, or give Selina's grey parrot a lump of sugar."

"The last would be no light feat," he assured her, "for the parrot is a shifty rascal and has a grudge against me already. He would bite my finger to the bone; therefore you make proof of my courage when you mention him."

There was that in the girl's voice and eyes that might have told a spectator of experience that Oxenham's case was not hopeless. She appeared to enjoy her conversation with him; but it was tinged with some misgiving, for very well she knew that the young man had been invited to Tudor Towers to fall in love with Selina or Jennie Glanvil and not with her. These patrician maidens were ill off for possible suitors at Daleham, and the respective elders of the two houses had hoped that the idle and impressionable Gilbert might fall to Selina's

statuesque stateliness, or Jennie's winsome charm. And here he was at the feet of somebody else! However, Honorine did not let the situation trouble her. She was interested, but certainly not in love. She suspected that the youth was of light metal and might, likely enough, change his mind again before he left Daleham.

Anon the party broke up, and having seen Honorine to her home, Doctor Baldwin, with whom were now his nephew and Gilbert Oxenham, for the latter accompanied them as far as the village, improved the occasion and sought to make a friend for the taciturn Warner in the more engaging and cheerful lad of his own age. Presently all three dropped in at *The Sailors' Joy* to drink a cordial with Henry Sidebottom.

It was very seldom that the doctor called here, but when he did, the honour was appreciated. They drank, hoped for another day with the hounds ere long and conversed concerning local politics. Then the doctor discussed Mr. Sidebottom's poetry.

"I tell the world that you bestride Pegasus as well as your hunter, Henry. Indeed you take flights on his back I should tremble to see you attempt in the field. What is your last effusion?"

"I have been idle of late, your reverence," confessed the publican. "Since poor Tresilion lost his life nothing has plucked a rhyme out of me. Nor was that of my best. In these matters we are at the mercy of the Muse."

"Most true, Henry. I, who preach a fresh sermon every Sunday of my life, should know that the afflatus varies whether your medium be verse or homely prose. Then since you have no new poem, let us read my favourite. You never made a merrier conceit than that. It is your masterpiece, Sidebottom."

"The Arrows' your reverence is always pleased to rate highest, though for my part I can never see why you do so. I hold it but a slight matter," declared the poet.

Then he opened the door behind the bar and called to his wife.

"Sophia! The Volume!"

She brought it, and while his hearers drank cherry brandy, the publican read the following poem :—

" THE ARROWS.

" Dan Cupid and Death went awalking one day
 And Dan finding Death in the dumps, soon made play,
 For he tipped the grey dustman a bit of a wink
 And said, ' What you want, my old boy, is a drink ! '
 So into a tavern together they got,
 Where they soaked for an hour and had many a pot.
 But while they sat boozing alongside the bar,
 Atalking of love and atalking of war,
 Some mischievous maiden peeped round for a sight
 Of their bows and their quivers and arrows so bright.
 Not content with a glimpse, she went playing at Fate
 And a terrible fancy got into her pate ;
 For she mixed up the arrows from each deadly store
 Then thrust them all back in the quivers once more.

* * * * *

Now hearing this story we all may take note
 Why the young sometimes die and the old sometimes dote.
 That the young should be called is a terrible thing
 And the kind angels weep when they're called on to bring
 A lad or a wench to the mansions above ;
 But the devils all laugh when the old people love."

" Excellent ! " cried Oxenham, " but have a care, inn-keeper, to keep that rhyme from Sir Simeon Glanvil, my host on the hill. The lord of the manor would like it little."

" I shall compose without doubt on the glad occasion of Sir Simeon's nuptials," declared Mr. Sidebottom, " And indeed this poem doth not cover his case. The lady is but fifty by all accounts and the baronet no more than sixty-eight. That is not old for love-making in Devonshire, I assure you, young gentleman."

CHAPTER VII

THE LIGHTHOUSE

E LIJAH NEWTE, like many other more important people, erred in his estimate of himself and suspected that he might set a higher value on his services than was the case.

He came to Nicholas three days before the date of his departure and explained the position.

"I ain't going to argue about it," he said. "You can take it or leave it. You know what I am in the boat and whether you want me to go out of it or not."

"What's the matter with you?" asked the other. "Of course I don't want you to go out of it; why should I?"

"Am I the most valuable hand you've got, or ain't I?" asked Newte.

"Suppose you are?"

"Does one of 'em know the French coast like me?"

"Granted."

"Then I'm worth keeping; but I'm not going to stop unless you can get a certain party to see sense."

"And who's the party? We're all good friends in the boat as far as I know."

"Tisn't anybody in the boat."

"Nobody else matters. You can't be set over Monk, if that's what you mean. He was my father's right hand years before your time."

"Tisn't anybody in the boat, I tell you. " "Tisn't a man at all. 'Tis a woman."

"Not my mother, Elijah?"

"No. She's always been a good friend to me."

"Then who the mischief is it?"

"Did your sister tell you of what happened between her and me yesterday on the cliff?"

"She did not."

"Thought it weren't worth naming, I dare say. But little though it may seem to her, 'twill take me out of the boat if it isn't righted. I want to marry her. I'm making money and almost one of the family a'ready you might say. Your father thought well of me and so does your mother, and so do you. But she—there is it. No reason but a woman's reason."

"Stop at that, Elijah! Let's catch your meaning if I can, though it sounds a bit mad to my ear. You say that if Faith don't take you, you'll go out of *The Grey Bird*?"

"I say it and I mean it," answered the giant. "And there's good reasons too. 'Tisn't as if she cared about any other man, but she don't."

"You can't make a girl love you. You can't force yourself down a woman's throat, though you have got a giant's strength."

"There must be give and take between your family and me. Anyway, them are my terms."

"You'd have her take you against her will? Suppose, even if I were willing, do you know the man or devil could make my sister do anything she wasn't minded to do?"

"Think a bit," answered the other, "afore you try that tone of voice. There's trouble coming. The country is at peace now, and they'll turn their attention to all such private matters as smuggling with a sharp hand. As it is Pawlet's to be sprung on us—that famous chap from Plymouth as got the Harper lot under lock and key and have a score of victories to his credit. So hot are they going to make it that Mutters and Caddell and Williams and, in fact, everybody round these parts is going to fling up the game. So much the better for us if we keep at it. But it lies in a nutshell now: you can't keep going without me; and my price is your sister."

"And if I tell you to go to hell, Elijah Newte?"

"I shan't go to hell; I shall go to Bob Pawlet, when

he takes up the work of the coastguard station. Don't you grow hot—that's no good. I've got you high and dry, Nick, so you'll do well to drop tall talk and listen to business. I want Faith, and there's no reason why I shouldn't have her. She's wife-old and 'tis time she took a husband. Be my side—that's all I ask. There's no hurry. Just work at her steady and regular and help her to see sense. That's not asking anything I've not a right to ask."

"If you're that sort, Elijah, I'd sooner have you out of the boat than in it. To bully a woman!"

"Don't you say that. I'm a good friend; but you can't have me for an enemy, you can't afford that."

"You threaten then?"

"I'm in love with your sister, and all's fair in love and smuggling. I know too much. Think how much I do know. There's no hurry. I'll come 'round land' with you into the North Channel to try the trawl, and you can consider what I'm worth."

He turned abruptly and left the younger man. Their conversation had taken place on Daleham quay, and when Newte was gone, the skipper, with a hot heart, surveyed the great departing figure, spat contemptuously, then took his pipe from his pocket, lit it and puffed at it, as though to fumigate the air that Newte had breathed. His inclination was to follow Elijah and knock him into the harbour, or try to do so; but he restrained himself, turned his back, set his elbows upon the parapet of the quay and stared out upon the bay.

He heard himself summoned a moment later and, turning, found that Doctor Baldwin and three young women demanded his attention.

"Well met, Nick," said the Vicar of Daleham. "You are fortunate, for if you have the time, as apparently you have, it shall be your privilege to row these three young ladies and myself to the lighthouse."

"And welcome, your reverence. I was just in the mind to go out myself to have a bit of a talk with my Uncle Jacob."

"Jacob Merle is the keeper," explained Doctor Baldwin to his companions, the Misses Glanvil and

Honorine Deschamps. He had long promised them a visit to the light on the Devil's Teeth Rocks, and was now fulfilling his undertaking.

"Merle," he continued, "is a wonderful old man and a rare favourite of mine. He loves the lighthouse and it is his home. His companion upon it comes and goes and takes his shift; but Merle chooses to stop there. The light is his child. He visits the shore sometimes in the mornings, when weather permits; and to church also he comes now and then as he can; but he is always on the lighthouse at night and invariably lights the lamps himself, whichever assistant may be sharing his labours with him."

"He came to father's funeral," said Nicholas, "and that's the last time he was ashore. I was thinking of going over this minute, for to ask him to come and see my mother."

"He has all her sense, without her ferocity and her extraordinary vocabulary," said Doctor Baldwin. "Really, Mrs. Tresilion's language beggars belief. The last time I visited her at her request, to smoke a pipe of wondrous fine tobacco and offer a prayer for her notable husband, she called me 'God Almighty's own black-beetle,' and intended it for a compliment!"

Honorine chatted with Nick as he stepped a mast in his dinghey, hoisted sail and slipped out between the harbour heads for the Devil's Teeth. It was after noon and a pleasant land breeze made a delicate pattern on the sea. The hour was bright, for the sun already began to turn westward and shoot long fans of watery splendour from behind the clouds that huddled over the earth. But seawards all was clear and the water and sky merged in a dim lilac light along the horizon.

"Hast thought better of Master Oxenham's petition, Tresilion?" asked Honorine.

"I have not thought on it at all, mamselle," he answered. "There's a lot for me to think upon these days."

"He's very clever in a boat and loves the sea."

"I doubt it not. Then why should he come with us? Belike after a fortnight knocking about in the North

Channel, with a chance of breaking our nose on Lundy Island some dirty night, he'd love the sea no more. 'Tis a bad thing they say to love and lose."

She laughed.

"If you were honest, Nick, you'd not want to keep such a gentleman out of your boat."

"Nicholas is the soul of honesty," declared her uncle. "In the past it is not denied that Nicholas looked at life with his father's eyes, and I never have and never will deny that according to his lights, John Tresilion did no wrong. But they were ancient lights. The State may err and often does so; nevertheless we, who are children of the State, must obey our mother and be dutiful and law-abiding citizens. Nicholas, with his Sunday school education and manly outlook on life, sees arguments that we could not expect his father to see, and is well aware that irregularities involving foreign imports cannot longer be practised by an honest and God-fearing man."

The sailor listened to this harangue but did not answer. It carried greater weight, however, than the speaker guessed. Fate seemed to be conspiring to point Nicholas away from the old business. He was young and uncertain in some directions, yet he had tasted the salt of that predatory existence, had heard bullets whistle over his head, had seen *The Grey Bird* race a Government cutter, and known the joy of successful runs. It was in his blood. He meant assuredly to return to it, and only temporary problems gave him pause.

Yet another pleaded with him before the day was done; but that was not until his sailing boat had slipped across the span of sea that separated Daleham from the chain of rocks. The wind was light and progress slow; but Doctor Baldwin enlivened it, discoursed upon lighthouses at large and revealed erudition in his usual unconscious and amiable fashion.

"At Sigeum in the Troad ascended your first regularly maintained pharos, and the Greek poet Lesches makes special reference to it in the year 660 B.C. But time has not stood still, and from that venerable beam perched on Cape Inchihisard to light the galleys of war and the

argosies of peace before the advent of the world's Saviour, to the present year of grace is a far cry."

He then described the wonder they were about to visit.

"It is one of Robert Stevenson's lighthouses," he said, "and in many respects a copy of his famous erection on the Bell Rock, off Forfarshire. They were both built in the same year, but ours, of course, is a smaller affair and not called upon to face such waves as bombard the Bell from the German Ocean. Stevenson built with stone, as Smeaton had done before him at the Eddystone, but his floors were a source of strength, not weakness, as in Smeaton's case. The floors of our lighthouse form part of the outer walls. We ascend solid to twenty-five feet above high water; our total height is sixty feet and our total weight some two thousand tons. There are five chambers beneath the light and the door is reached by an iron ladder that ascends from the landing-place."

They listened patiently, and Doctor Baldwin, who loved an exposition of this sort, dilated on the wonder of the fixed light—a very modest affair as compared with those of to-day.

"We possess the catoptric system of illumination," he told them, "and you shall see a mighty, marvellous matter of parabolic reflectors made of silvered glass. It would weary you were I to explain the optical properties of this invention. Let it suffice that all rays of light from this reflector diverge strictly from the focus, and, falling on the paraboloid, emerge in one intense beam of parallel rays. Of old time the wicks of the lamps were flat; but the Almighty smiles on humanity's efforts to safeguard her sons from the perils of the deep, and so He bestowed especial genius on Argand, who, in the year 1782, conceived of wicks and burners in a hollow, cylindric form, which admitted a central current of air and, igniting the escaping gas more completely, improved the quality of the light created."

He discoursed in this fashion without ceasing until the lighthouse was reached; then Nick dropped his sail and slid under the squat mass of rock that supported the tower. The entrance opened north and

faced the shore, and beneath it, on a railed platform of rock that ran round the base and was naked at low tide, stood Jacob Merle himself, fishing. He was like his sister, Emma Tresilion—a being of great bulk ; but he was older than Nick's mother, and indeed began to grow too old for his arduous work. Mr. Merle was dark-eyed and ruddy, but as mild as the bed-ridden widow was fierce. He had long deplored the wild ways of *The Grey Bird* and only waited for an opportunity to speak with his nephew and impress upon him the hope that he would not pursue his dead father's calling.

Thus it happened, while Mr. Merle's assistant keeper took the ladies and Doctor Baldwin to see the light-house with its stores and dwelling-room, water tanks, oil tanks and wonderful lantern aloft, that Nick watched his uncle fish and heard the old man preach.

He brought most excellent advice upon himself, for he told the ancient of his difficulties and how Elijah Newte proposed to leave the boat if Faith would not wed him.

"I always mistrusted that man, though I held my tongue for charity," said Jacob Merle, as he landed a rock pouting, baited his hook and cast forth again.

"And this bare-faced idea—it makes an old man's blood boil, nephew Nick. If Faith has given him his answer, what more is to be said about it by a decent man ? I'm glad to think he leaves the boat, for he's better out than in."

"'Tis what he knows that makes him so darnation bold," said Nicholas ; whereupon his uncle set about him, appealed to reason and right, bade him look ahead and urged him with all the eloquence at his command to follow in his father's footsteps no more, but pursue the road of honesty and plain dealing and lead his crew aright in the time to come.

"See how easy it is to confound a crooked man," he said. "If you were straight and above board, you could laugh at this knave and his secrets. Only because he believes himself strong does he dare to threaten you in such a bouldacious fashion ; but if you go straight, then his strength is turned to weakness and you need fear

nothing that he, or any other rascal can do against you. The past is past and my brother-in-law has paid the price ; and such a good man as he was and such a father to the poor and needy is safe up aloft—with his eyes cleared and sorrow for his sins in his heart. And he's watching you now, Nick—if the dead be allowed to take count of their dear ones on earth, then he's watching you now, and hoping and praying that you'll be led to better things.”

“ I’m not death on smuggling for that matter,” said Nicholas, “ only if you’ve learned a clever trade, you’re a fool not to practise it.”

“ Thieving may be clever ; but so’s a lot of other wicked things you’d never sink to. There’s plenty of honest work for you in the world, and I hope you’ll do it and turn your back on France and all their wicked temptations. The wages of sin is death and ashes in the end, and so you’ll find it if you persist.”

He continued and Nicholas was shaken not a little. But the necessity to decide this great question did not immediately intrude, whereas with respect to Elijah Newte, he was called to make up his mind at once. That night, therefore, when he sat beside his mother, from force of habit he brought her his difficulties, and listened to her views on the subject of Mr. Newte and his demand.

“ What with one thing and another, you’d think I wasn’t meant to go free trading no more,” he said. “ Here’s Uncle Jacob on to me about it, and his Reverence preached a sermon to-day and said in his opinion I’ve got no choice. He thinks the time is past for free trading, and that a young man like me did ought to put away all such ideas. And Uncle Jacob—of course he never held with it, and says that ‘tis a sin against conscience, and those that sin against conscience sin with a witness. In fact, he frightened me a bit. And then, atop of it all, there’s Elijah Newte.”

Mrs. Tresilion’s great black eyes grew rounder and rounder while she listened.

“ Thunder and treacle ! ” she burst out at last. “ What are you chittering about, like a magpie with the

pip? Be it Nicholas Tresilion I hear, or a white-livered doe-rabbit that's got down his neck? Give up free trade? because that superannuated old limpet, Jacob, says you ought, and the reverend Upcott Baldwin—drat the old tun-belly! When I think of the kegs and kegs he's had all for love! And now, behind my back, to yelp his molly-coddle mess to you. And you listen! And Elijah Newte—what next? Have Elijah Newte been preaching too—a hugeous, great, long-legged, louse-hearted son of a lobster."

"Hold on, mother. You've got it wrong," explained Nicholas. "Newte is leaving the boat."

"Leaving the boat!"

"I reckon I know something about that," said the old woman's daughter, who sat beside her. "Mr. Newte wanted me to marry him and was a bit more than pressing. I told him that I couldn't do it, and he got nasty and said if I didn't have him, he'd leave the boat."

"This beats Beelzebub!" cried Mrs. Tresilion. "That dish-clout, that bottle-rag to dare to talk as if he was—! Fetch him—fetch him this instant moment. Meat for his master you'll be I should hope, Faith Tresilion—a bowerly creature like you—the living image of myself at twenty. Then let him leave the boat—with all the curses of all the Seven Seas on his head. Him—some rubbish picked up out of a foreign gutter by my dead and gone saint—and then to pay back his debts by offering to claw my daughter! And her filling the eye of that dazzling, young, melancholy French nobleman with his houses and lands. Why, good God A'mighty's pocket handkerchief! We shall have all the stars of heaven falling down the chimley next! Away with him!"

"That's all right, mother, but you've got to look all round it," explained Faith. "Of course I can't take the man if I don't love him; but he knows such a lot. He knows the secret way up to Hordell's; and he knows about Egg and Cawdle; and he knows everything on t'other side. Nick can't speak French, no more can any but Elijah."

Mrs. Tresilion rose and fell like a ship at anchor in a running sea. The mountain of her heaved and made her bed shake.

"If I hear any more of it, *I'll* come in the boat!" she said. "Yes I will; and then you'll want no ballast, for I'll be brains and ballast both. And so, because this dung beetle knows a thing or two and threatens, John Tresilion's son be minded to give up free trade and stop at home tied to his mother's apron strings—to catch shrimps and go to church o' Sundays! Strike me ginger and burn me blue! I little thought to see any son of mine with his tail between his legs because a creature like Newte holds a pistol to his ear!"

She panted and the dust came down in a cloud from the tester of the great bed.

"Give me a drink and my pipe," she said. "This is almost more than an old woman can be called upon to suffer."

"So be it, mother—and I'm with you heart and soul, and so's Faith," said Nicholas. "We'll go ahead and rip to hell if need be, same as father did; and if that man plays foul, I'll treat him like John Tresilion treated the gauger. Only I won't go too."

She beamed again.

"That's my saint's son speaking," she cried. "That's my Nick! You listen to your old mother, you brave, young cock goldfinch, and you trust her and your quick-witted sister and your fine crew. 'Twould break my heart, if such as you, reared by a man like my John, should turn psalm-singer. You take heaven by storm and go up aloft the same way your father did, and the same way as I shall; and that's not by snivelling and wearing out the knees of your trousers, but by doing man's work on sea and land. And as for Elijah Newte—misbegotten tadpole of an Egyptian crocodile that he is—let him do his worst. Nothing's too bad for the scab, and I hope I shall live to hear you've put a foot of cold steel in him some fine day, or else a pound of lead. So like as not 'twas him that ruined father. So fetch the hollands and drink to a red-hot grid-iron for the fantastical traitor!"

CHAPTER VIII

ASSAULT AND BATTERY

CIRCUMSTANCES thus conspired to work Gilbert Oxenham's will, for not only did Faith press young Tresilion to grant the favour, but Honorine herself made petition, and finally Paul Deschamps put it to Nicholas also.

Indeed Paul and his friend, Oxenham, came to the harbour on purpose, and finding that Tresilion was aboard, they took a dinghy and rowed out where *The Grey Bird* lay at anchor.

That famous fishing-boat, the Cornish lugger, is built on a larger scale to-day than when Tresilion's vessel rode at Daleham, and the big forty-tonners, now common at Penzance or Newlyn, were not then in existence ; but *The Grey Bird* was a good-sized boat for those times, full-decked with the favourite rig of dipping lug-foresail and standing lug-mizen—a noble type of world-wide fame where men sail boats. As to her lines, stem and stern of *The Grey Bird* were alike, and in the full, bold curves at the quarters leading to the stern post did her chief beauty appear. She was a classic West Cornishman, a drifter who took a mile of nets to sea with her, and when at her legitimate work would welcome the mackerel in spring time a hundred miles west of Scilly, and in autumn share with big east coast "dandies" and Scotch "Fifies" the harvest of the herring. The late John Tresilion had been something of a pioneer in sail craft, and since speed to him was a vital matter, he had puzzled to know how to get more out of *The Grey Bird* than her Mount's Bay builder would promise. He had her mizen mast stepped far inboard, and with such a

rake forward that the sail area on board was unusually great ; but this was no innovation, whereas a running bowsprit and a jib was, at that date, held of doubtful value in a lugger. He knew, however, that in light winds *The Grey Bird* was much undercanvassed and no faster than the cutter-rigged trawlers which composed the fleet of Daleham ; and he had therefore made this improvement and found a well cut jib lift her bows and greatly increase her speed. To-day the sail is usual ; but a hundred years ago it was regarded with doubt, since only a rare sailing genius knows how perfectly to set a jib and get the best out of it. But such was Tresilion and such his son hoped to be. Nicholas had watched his father many a time and seen him out-point and out-sail every fore-and-aft rig fisher he had met with ; and he also remembered a merry dance with a Government cutter from Plymouth in which *The Grey Bird*, with her clean lines and great spread of fair weather canvas, soon had the larger vessel hull down.

The young men came aboard to find Nicholas packing stores ; but he knocked off from his work and showed Oxenham the boat and her beauties. Everything was in apple-pie order, and the visitor, who loved the sea and knew it well, expressed such admiration and showed such technical knowledge that he won Tresilion's heart.

A great experiment was to be made, for just before his death, the master had acquired a trawl and *The Grey Bird* was about to try her fortunes in harness. Many declared that she was quite unsuited to such work, but the experiment alone would prove whether they were right or wrong ; and to the North Channel she was about to sail upon this new errand.

"Two weeks we shall be at it and give it a fair trial," explained Nicholas. "Daleham men are famous in the Bristol Channel. You may say they've made it famous. Milford Haven's our fishing port. But we land in North Devon too."

"I hear Elijah Newte is going out of the boat," said Paul. He had learned this from Faith, but little guessed the reason.

"He's gone."

"Who sails instead?"

"Nobody. We're short-handed."

"You'll feel that more with a trawl than with drift nets," declared Oxenham. "It all points one way, Tresilion; you've got to come to it and take me."

Nicholas laughed.

"The whole world seems bent on your sailing with me, master. Best think twice. You know the life and what we're going to do. But maybe you don't guess what a blow in the North Channel can be, with the sea running in from the Atlantic like rolling fields, and a jagged saw of white water piled up for hedges between the waves."

"You won't fright me," answered Gilbert. "I've been wrecked and love it yet."

So Nicholas relented and the other went rejoicing homeward to prepare for his adventure. In truth he cared not over-much for the particular experience ahead, but he looked beyond it; he had romantic ideas of France and the possibility of serving Honoree in some capacity during the time to come. He believed that once aboard *The Grey Bird*, he would soon show the captain and crew the man he was and make them feel that it was better to have him in the boat than out. He was rich, independent, enthusiastic; and his simple mind turned to this adventure as of all others the best calculated to lead him into a lady's favour.

As for Mother Tresilion, she approved when her son told her.

"Them that would go to sea for pleasure would go to hell for pastime," she said. "But gentlefolk be made of different mud from us. They're all weak in their heads and always crying out for some new thing. Let him go, and make him work, and don't you put him ashore the first minute he cries out to go home."

"He's not that sort; he'll stand to work."

"What money's to it?"

"He offers ten guineas and will bring his own victuals from Tudor Towers."

Thus, then, was the matter arranged, and there came an evening when *The Grey Bird* sailed on the tide with the fleet, and passed through the sturdy trawlers as though they were standing still.

"Like a hawk in a flock of pigeons," said Oxenham.

The sky was red and the wind fair, for it blew from the east. Soon the lugger cleared the Devil's Teeth and set her course down Channel, while Daleham light flashed farewell and Mr. Jacob Merle, standing in the lantern, watched his nephew depart.

Ashore another followed *The Grey Bird* with her eyes until she vanished behind Daleham Head; whereupon Nick's sister turned from the cliff-brow and prepared to descend by a winding path.

It was then she had the adventure of her young life, for there came towards her Elijah Newte and stopped her and spoke with her. She looked about her, but the place was lonely and the dusk was nearly down. Some unfamiliar suspicion touched the girl. It was not fear, for that she did not know, but a presentiment of evil shadowed in Newte's sulky face.

"Well met," he said, "I thought to find you here. You've carried it with a high hand, missy, but you can't no more. I want you to know just exactly what you've done, then perhaps you'll find yourself in some haste to undo it again."

"There's no need for talk between us," she answered. "You're a man that knows the world—not a headstrong, silly boy—like some. You offered fair and square to wed me and I answered fair and square that I was very wishful to be your friend, but wed you I could not. That's how it stands, and enough said. It wasn't honest, nor yet manly, nor yet very common-sensible to come to Nick, like you did, and say that if I didn't wed you, you wouldn't stop in the boat. Surely to God, Elijah, you don't want to marry a woman that's got no use for you?"

"You'd have come to it and found me the very man. Don't I know myself better than a green girl? It was fitting and proper that you should marry a man in the boat, and if you hadn't had your head turned by a

certain damned young fool who shall be nameless, and who pretends that he'd marry you, to win his own ends, then you'd have had time to see what you were doing."

"Don't you drag him in, or think evil thoughts about him," answered Faith. "He's a gentleman, and you ain't worthy to clean his boots. And if he thought that the dirty like of you were troubling me and mine, he'd very soon have you on your marrow-bones."

Newte laughed.

"That's it, is it? You wait and see what your frog-eater's good for when it comes to the pinch. I'd throw him over the cliff with one hand."

"You think might is all, you great clown," she answered indignantly. "The like of you with more muscle than brains are very willing to fancy that your thews and sinews are the finest thing in the world. If they are, then any jack-ass drawing a truck-a-muck is better than you. You ought to be ashamed of your silly pride and vanity. Where will you get work like you had on *The Grey Bird*? And where will you get mates like the men in her? And all because it's a free country and I don't want you."

"Wait," he said. "You haven't heard the last of me, Faith Tresilion, nor yet seen the last of me. And don't call me a fool neither, for whatever you know, you know better than that. I'm no fool and you and yours shall find it out. A time will come sooner than you think—"

"Oh, stop that stuff and get out of my road," she said indignantly. "I'm sick of you. A trouble-making, own-self man—as if we hadn't had enough bother and difficulties without your adding to them."

He barred her way, he hustled her, tried to anger her, and succeeded much quicker than he expected. Furious with the bully she lifted her hand suddenly and caught him a stinging box on the ear, then tried to dart past him before he had recovered from his surprise. But she failed in this. He was too quick for her, gripped her wrist and dragged her back; then, inflamed by the blow from her strong hand, he seized her roughly, dragged her

body to his in a bestial embrace, hugged her brutally and kissed her all over her face.

The frantic girl struggled and screamed till the cliffs echoed ; then her cries fell on the ear of a man who walked alone in the twilight not far distant. He was young and of middle height, well knit, slim and dapper with broad shoulders and a strong, aquiline face. His eyes were small and keen, his whole being alert, brisk and apprehensive. He sped now to the scene of the assault, and cursing Elijah Newte very heartily for a cowardly cur, attacked him with his fists. The giant thereupon thrust Faith from him, so violently that she fell, and then turned on her rescuer.

"Mind your own business another time," cried the smuggler, "whoever you be."

"'Tis my business, or any man's, to stop a coward from bullying a woman," answered the unknown in a quiet voice. But despite his courage, he could be no match for the big man. There was a difference of five stone between them, and while the smaller was also much the quicker, he could not parry the immense arms of Newte. Elijah swung his fists haphazard, and if only his lighter adversary had been able to keep him out, he might have made a battle of it ; but fighting with the fists was not a science of which the stranger knew anything, and he was further disconcerted by the action of the heroine of the scene, for despite his entreaty, that she would run away and get out of peril, Faith, seeing the new-comer was in danger of a bad beating, leapt at Elijah as strong and fierce as a young tigress, got her arm round his throat and strove to drag him to the ground. Blind with rage the big man responded and fate was with him. He tore the girl off and flung her heavily to earth ; then he set about the knight-errant in earnest, and presently getting home a tremendous swing of his left arm with all the weight of his bullock shoulder behind it, landed a very formidable "knock out" that would have stopped any human being opposed to it. On the slight figure of the stranger the blow fell with terrific effect. The man flung up his hands, uttered one groan and fell supine and insensible.

Conscious that the blow had gone home with more than usual directness and doubtful of the result, Newte prepared to depart.

"I've killed the devil I reckon, and the less you know about it the better for you. You'd best to get going, for if he's dead 'twill be your fault—making all that upstore about a kiss."

"You brutal dog!" she said. "If he's dead, you shall swing for it if I've got a tongue in my head. And whether he is or not, you mark me—'tis all up with you now for evermore. Every decent man and woman shall have their hand against you to your dying day!"

With that she turned to the unconscious stranger at their feet, and while Newte disappeared into the shadows of evening, Faith sought to restore his victim. But for a time he did indeed appear to be dead. She ran where a stream tumbled down the cliff not far distant, and taking her sun-bonnet, she steeped it in the water, returned and bathed the unconscious man's forehead. She almost despaired, since still he gave no sign of reawakening life; but just as she was in a mind to hasten to the village and utter an alarm, he came to himself, opened his eyes and lay staring up at her, though for some time he uttered no word.

"Thank God, master, you're not dead! Oh dear, oh dear, but I thought you must be, and I was just flashing off so fast as lightning to tell about it."

"Where's that infernal scoundrel?" he asked.

"He's gone. He thought he'd killed you."

"A man doesn't die as easy as that," he answered
"Twas only a 'knock out.' I've seen them given before to-day, but never felt one before, and hope I never may again."

He sat up and put his hands to his head.

"How is it with you?" he asked. "He handled you pretty rough I'm fearing."

"I'm all right. He's a chap called Elijah Newte and was wishful to marry me, but because I refused, he forgot himself like that. He'll pay for his fun when my brother comes home from sea. Can you walk? Our cottage be the nearest, and you'd best come there."

"Wait a while. Let me get my wits back."

"I'm sure I'm terrible obliged to you," said Faith.

"'Twas just bad luck he got in on me like that, for I would have beat him in the long run," answered the other.

"Of course you would. And a brave man must you be to have fought him at all."

"Lucky I was nigh—beastly rogue that he is. I didn't know such creatures could be found nowadays. But there's some queer craft in these waters seemingly. I've sighted a good few a'ready."

She looked at his keen face, now rendered comical by the swelling on his chin. She liked his voice and the way in which he had taken his downfall.

"If you'll come along, we'll get a bit of brown paper in vinegar to your chin, master."

"My chin was big enough before," he said. "You want a bit of chin in the world nowadays, mistress. Life will soon crack you if you haven't got a good pinch of steel in your clay."

"No fear for you, I reckon: If you take my arm, I'll get you down the hill."

"You're a fine, strong piece yourself," he said.

"I come of strong folk."

He looked at her and she saw that his eyes were luminous in the gathering gloom. One faint breath of sunset splendour still flickered behind the purple contours of the land, but the sea was still visible and Daleham light blazed steadily upon it. Overhead the stars began to come out.

The stranger proved very weak and did not disdain Faith's arm and shoulder. Slowly they descended and she led him to her home, opened the door and brought him into the kitchen.

"Rest you here for a bit," she said, "and I'll tell my mother the story."

But another also heard it, for Emma Tresilion was not alone. Beside her sat an old crony—an aged, red-eyed woman, whose attire seemed chiefly of sack-cloth. She was a bundle of picturesque rags and could hardly

have been uglier ; but she was a wife—indeed the wife of a celebrity. Mrs. Abednego Egg now listened to the revelation and joined in expressions of horror and disgust at Newte's conduct.

"Wait till my son comes home," cried Emma. "Wait till the girl's brother, Nicholas, returns back and he shall skin the hide off that Turk and then toast him before a slow fire. And as for you, young man, a bed-ridden mother thanks you. I'm only sorry, that you've got such a whisterpoop on the chin, for I dare say you'd be a very good-looking young youth if it weren't for that. Get the vinegar and brown paper, Faith, and clap it on, else his own mother won't know him when it have risen. I warrant murder would have been done if you hadn't come along, my fine young sparrow-hawk, and I thank you for it, and if you're a Daleham man, you'll be as welcome here as anywhere."

"I'm not a Daleham man, but I soon shall be."

"That's right. My dead saint was a Cornishman—a proper foreigner to these parts ; but he grew to be a native in six months, and was easily the best thought-upon hero for twenty miles round, weren't he, Milly Egg ? "

Mrs. Egg answered that it was so.

"Nobody like him," she said. "Him and my old man was the difference between light and darkness, and yet very good friends."

"He never had no enemy, but one," declared Emma. "But never mind him. How be it with you, my young, tibby lamb ? Youth's the best ointment for bruises, my pretty girl. I lay you'll be all right to-morrow. Now give this boy four fingers of the best."

"A drop of grog wouldn't be amiss," admitted the stranger. "I'm glad 'tis no worse and very well content to drink good luck to your fine maiden. If it hadn't been for her, I daresay that dog would have trod my face in after he knocked me senseless."

"If it hadn't been for me, he wouldn't have knocked

you senseless at all," she said, and fetched a bottle of spirits.

"None as do a child of mine a good turn shall find me ungrateful," declared Mother Tresilion, "and none as do me or mine a bad turn shall find me forgetful. There's twenty-four hours in the day and my enemy can be smote in any one of 'em. And as for that anointed priest of the Devil, Elijah Newte, his thread's spun after to-night and he might so soon go and call on the hills to cover him as not. In a forked stick he'll be-cached and wriggling, like any other poisonous long-cripple, afore he's a month older. But you—you're a very comely, honest and plain-dealing chap to come to a maiden in distress, and I like you for it, and I'll kiss you afore you go. Here's to your very good health, my fine cockerel. Drink so deep as you please and then take another. 'Twon't hurt you. It ain't liquid fire like the stuff they sell in this country. 'Tis just pure distilled, seasoned spirit and wouldn't hurt a new-born babe."

But the stranger drank and looked suspicious.

"Ah—you haven't tasted the like afore I'll warrant," she said.

"Yes I have," he answered. "But not in the way of honesty. 'Tis above proof."

The old woman laughed.

"Well, here's good fortune and long life, and if you've come to live in Daleham, you can count us for your friends; and if you know where you can get finer friends than us, I should like to see 'em."

"Good luck to you, ma'am," he answered, draining his mug and slapping his chest. "There—that's better—just a little one to top up and then I shall be my own man."

"Be you a sea-farer?" asked Faith. "I know the signs of them pretty well, but you ain't dressed like them."

"Among friends," he said, "I may tell you these ain't my true togs—just a bit of disguise like. You see I'm one of them amphibious creatures, and land or sea is all alike to me. In fact, I'm just having a look round and

learning my moorings afore I haul up my colours. In a word I'm Robert Pawlet, the new exciseman, from Plymouth."

Mrs. Tresilion leapt, so that her great bed trembled and the dust fell in a cloud.

"Spring onions and holy water!" she shouted, "this is the end of the world!"

CHAPTER IX

TRIBULATION FOR PAUL DESCHAMPS

PAUL DESCHAMPS and his cousin, the lieutenant, had settled their differences out of respect for Doctor Baldwin. They were supposed to be friends again; but in reality no friendship existed between them, nor had it been possible for the impetuous and fiery Frenchman to find common ground with one of such a cold, calculating and cowardly nature as the young soldier. Only for a season did any sort of amity obtain between them; then circumstances constrained Deschamps to touch very delicate ground and the result was inevitable: a furious quarrel accompanied by circumstances that admitted of only one conclusion.

Selina Glanvil had come to Paul and implored him, if it might be done without indelicacy, to hint to his cousin that his attentions in a certain quarter were unwelcome and distasteful; for it happened that the lieutenant, disappointed of a dead woman's shoes and conscious that his last hope of fortune had been swept away, began to stir himself and, like many another lazy man, had fastened upon the thought of a well-dowered wife. He entertained a good conceit of his personal appearance and believed himself a very fine figure to the eye; but he was something too lenient in this self-estimate, for, at any rate in the quarter where he now paid court, his splendid frame and upstanding person weighed nothing against the expression of his countenance and an attitude to life which he endeavoured ineffectually to conceal.

The two young men had been rabbit shooting on Hordell's Head, and now, with Tom Otter, they sat

and took their midday meal. A pile of grey and white fur lay beside them, while the creature largely responsible for such good sport—a great red setter, sat with his masters and shared their lunch.

Then Paul, deciding the opportunity was good, decreed that they should shoot no more and, their meal ended, sent Otter home with the guns and spoil. But his dog he kept beside him.

When they were alone he turned to Lieutenant Baldwin, who was smoking one of his uncle's cigars, and came to the matter in his thoughts.

" You are aware I have no further quarrel with you, Warner," he began, " and what I am to say is dictated by no animosity to yourself. Goodwill prompts it rather, for the facts are painful, and had they come to the ear of any but a friend, he would no doubt have escaped the ordeal thrust upon me and declined to meddle in the matter. But thus it is, and as a gentleman, you cannot but be obliged to me for setting you right in a delicate matter where, it would seem, you are going wrong."

As yet the other did not guess what was coming. He had been assiduous in his courting for a fortnight and believed that he gained ground. No reason in reality existed for this sanguine opinion, but Warner's self-love blinded him, and he misread the situation in its false light.

" It is the least a friend can do to correct one's errors if in his power," he answered. " And you are such a brilliant and far-seeing person that doubtless you could put us all right, if you would but condescend to do so."

" Do not sneer," answered the other. " I am not speaking to you for my own pleasure, and have no more wish to set you right than to be corrected by you. Only another is involved—one of far greater importance to me than you are. In a word I speak of a lady. You are pressing your attentions on Jennie Glanvil, and I regret to inform you that the compliment you pay her is not appreciated. The thing you aim at cannot happen, and you will do wisely to desist from the attempt."

Lieutenant Baldwin blushed deeply and a sulky light burnt from his scowling eyes. This was a most unexpected challenge. It banished his self-control and made him forget himself. He spoke coarsely.

"And who appointed you the messenger? Am I to understand that Miss Glanvil bade you, of all men, bring this information?"

"You are not. For whom I venture to speak is no matter. The point is that I have done so, and what I tell you is the truth."

The other was silent for some moments. Then his anger broke forth—in no loud-voiced thunder; but with cold and biting words.

"Well, my squire of dames, perhaps one good turn deserves another. So I will give you advice for yours. Not, however, that I take yours. It is from Jennie Glanvil I receive my congé, not from you, or another. I might have thought perchance that I was hunting in your preserve and that you took this unmannerly way to let me know it; but, unless you have two strings to your bow—a course common with your countrymen—I suppose I must not think you are interested in the lady. And that because you are engaged so deeply elsewhere. Now hear my advice. I, at least, court honourably and seek to win a wife in my own sphere; but what is Paul Deschamps doing? You deny me your informant and I shall deny you mine, but the fact remains that my fine cousin is running after a smuggler's daughter—the child of a noted rascal, recently and very properly done to death for his sins. Remember your caste, my friend, and respect your relations if you cannot respect yourself. I at least have paid honourable court to a gentlewoman; but what of Faith Tresilion?"

"You will have it," answered the other. "I have been patient for our uncle's sake; but patience is no virtue of mine, and in any case thrown away on a currish, worthless and insolent scoundrel like yourself. There is nothing more to be done now and I bandy no words with you. Let it suffice that if you have a friend, he had better call and see Gilbert Oxenham when he returns from his cruise. Gilbert will stand for me. You are a

cur and a coward, and I will answer your insult as it can only be answered."

"And why should friend of mine visit Oxenham?" asked the other. "Why may you insult me in the sacred matter of my tenderest affections, while when I presume to offer you a word of warning, it is matter for such an explosion?"

"You know the answer to both questions," shouted Paul, in a voice so loud that it echoed from the cliffs beside them and set the sea-gulls flying and crying. "You know what you have done and the payment that I demand. But since you need more incentive to stir your reptile blood, take it. Is that enough?"

They stood side by side, and now, with a swift action, the smaller man lifted his hand to Warner's face, seized his big nose between finger and thumb and gave it a very violent tweaking.

"There!" he said. "Now you know why your friend, if you have one, can call upon Oxenham at Tudor Towers. And let us meet no more until he has done so."

He cast a glance of hearty contempt at his cousin, then turned his back upon him and proceeded swiftly along the cliffs. The other made no attempt to follow, but stood in one place for half an hour. He rubbed his nose and communed with the devil.

To fight a duel was no occupation for Warner Baldwin; but to revenge himself on his cousin promised profitable employment. His secret hope of allying himself with the Glanvils was clearly shattered: it remained to be seen whether the evil genius of the young man could lead him elsewhere to better purpose. He was not impetuous and decided to proceed slowly and with utmost caution. His immediate object—one from which no accident of chance or fate would ever turn him now—was to be terribly revenged for the shattering insults of that day. But the means were hidden from him as yet. His instinct was always to seek the aid of one stronger than himself in any possible enterprise, and now he began to wonder if

there existed others in the world who hated Paul Deschamps as much as he did.

Meantime his cousin had tramped himself into better humour, only to be put out of it again by a chance meeting.

That night he was engaged to meet Faith Tresilion at the familiar tryst, and since his scene with Warner and the latter's allusions to his love affair, Paul had considered nothing but the forthcoming appointment. If men had this matter in their mouths and his attachment was known, then it grew time to win a definite answer from Faith. He could wait and woo no longer without grave chance of compromising her fair name and involving himself in scandal. The idea was intolerable, and he felt that she must definitely acknowledge him as her accepted suitor. There were other reasons also why this conclusion should be no longer delayed, for the young man knew more about the secrets of European politics than many in England at this moment, and he was aware that the early spring would probably re-awaken conflagrations believed extinct.

His decision put good heart into him, and he was whistling cheerfully and about to turn homeward when, striding out to cliff edge, between lofty flowering clumps of the greater gorse, he came suddenly upon Faith Tresilion and a man. She sat on a mossy stone and her companion reclined upon the turf a few yards from her.

But neither was the least embarrassed, for Faith knew no conventions, while Robert Pawlet had met her quite by chance but half an hour before. Moreover he was ignorant of Paul Deschamps and had never seen the gentleman until that moment. To meet Faith at all just now was jejune and stupid, and Paul's sense and feeling in such a matter rebelled as at an anti-climax; but to meet her with a strange man pleased her lover little. Moreover the unknown was good to look upon—a clean-cut, handsome fellow with something hard and strong about him, like a bird of prey. Pawlet, indeed, was a type that Deschamps had approved at another time and place, but to see him here, in this lonely spot, conversing as it seemed familiarly

with Faith, annoyed the lover as much as it astonished him. He did not speak, but regarded them without friendship. Then he fixed his eyes on the girl's and kept them there, with a question in them. But she was in no wise concerned. She rose, approached him and offered her hand.

"Have you come to seek me?" she asked, "or did chance hap to bring you?"

"Nothing but chance. We meet—elsewhere."

"So we do. This is Master Paul Deschamps, of Four Oaks, one of the first gentlemen of Daleham, exciseman."

She spoke to Pawlet, who immediately rose and saluted.

"And who are you?" he asked.

"Robert Pawlet, your honour. Him that's got Albert Lees his place."

Now Deschamps stared indeed. Here, it seemed, was Faith carrying the war into the enemy's country with a vengeance. But how had she found Pawlet out in this fashion, and what was her object in doing so? He doubted not that she was working for *The Grey Bird*, and that, probably with her mother's help, she was weaving a spell round the new-comer with a view of ensuring the future safety of Nicholas and his company. The idea disgusted him—as much with Faith as with the exciseman. He began to build on his conclusions before any opportunity to prove their soundness had offered. He felt ill at ease and desired to be gone, but he could not immediately turn his back upon them.

Then Faith spoke.

"I'm longing to tell upon the adventure that got us acquainted with Mr. Pawlet. You shall hear about it to-night. Then you'll thank him for doing me a good turn, though at cruel cost to himself."

"'Twas nothing at all: any man would have done the like, and most men done it better," declared Pawlet.

The other viewed him up and down, but knew not what to say. He dared not speak out, for he could not tell how much the exciseman might know concerning

Faith and her family. He had, in fact, to wait until the time came for meeting Faith alone.

"I wish you joy of your work in this place, gauger," he said. "From all one hears whispered by the birds, we are a very industrious people at Daleham, and much addicted to minding our own business. I fear you'll find few friends."

"Every honest man will be my friend, sir," declared the other with confidence. "For the rest, I don't want their friendship."

Paul lifted his hat to Faith and went his way. He was disturbed at the incident, yet knew not why. That she should have taken the bull by the horns and made friends with one inevitably destined to be her brother's enemy, was characteristic of Faith—just such a step as he could imagine her taking ; but Pawlet was handsome and the girl had spoken of some previous passages that had brought them together. He doubted not that she had been planning and plotting to make Pawlet's acquaintance and suspected that, now it was made, Faith found it not disagreeable. To sum up, young Deschamps felt in no good humour and wished evening would come, that he might learn from the girl's own lips a true recital of events.

That night, however, his business took him to another meeting beside Dale, before he arrived at the fishing seat sacred to Faith ; for higher up the valley, in a small house on the river, lived Abednego Egg, the coffin-maker, whose tilt-cart was rumoured to carry so much else beside coffins. He was indeed a trantier, and made many irregular journeys to Westmouth, Plymouth and other towns on the coast. His shop occupied the upper floor of Mr. Egg's abode, and beneath it he lived with his old wife, Milly, a creature as aged, but far more decrepit, than "Bad" Egg himself. To-night she was very sick and sat alone with her head wrapped up in flannel. Paul stayed not to announce himself, but entered the kitchen as one having a right there, and asked Mrs. Egg whether her husband had returned from Plymouth.

She nodded and pointed to the mantel shelf, where stood a packet sealed and bound.

"The French fishing-boat came in just as Egg drove down the Barbican quay," she said.

"What's this I hear of Elijah Newte?"

"Tis true, if you've heard that my husband's taken him on to work. He tried the free traders round about, but by the look of it they are all going to give up now. All frightened at the new gauger. So for the present Newte comes to us, worse luck."

"I know nothing of him save that he is a great fool. Why did he leave Tresilion?"

But Mrs. Egg would not say. She declared herself to be very ill.

"But my coffin is ready, Master Paul. Abednego made it twenty year agone, when he cared for me better than he do now."

"Cheer up," answered the young man. "You're tough and hard I'll warrant. The spring will soon be here and your blood will run free and fast again."

He took his packet and left her; then following a pathway by the river, quickly reached the familiar tryst. To-night there was no moon, but he knew his way and soon held Faith's hands in his.

"Now," he said, "tell me about this mighty mystery. I'm on thorns to learn the meaning of it all."

For a moment she was silent. A great fish splashed in the pool.

"You owe me some amends," he said. "A lover little likes these surprises. And still less he cares to hear that any man but himself has been of mighty service to his mistress. Tell me how it came about that this new arrival was able to serve you so well. He has won your friendship it would appear, or is it all nonsense said to hoodwink him? Perhaps you are thinking more of the future and Nicholas than of the exciseman himself?"

In reply Faith told him the whole truth. She spared no particular, from the time that Newte had thrust himself upon her, and she concluded in these words—

"Robert Pawlet is a very fine and honourable man.

My mother likes him. There are no secrets. I do not know what will happen when Nicholas comes back; but nothing will ever prevent Robert Pawlet from doing his duty."

"How do you know that?"

"One understands what a man is made of," said Faith. "One knows when one finds a man that cannot be bought. They are rare, but though one's experience of such men is an uncommon thing, yet one makes no mistake. I am lucky perhaps to know two such men—you and Mr. Pawlet."

He grew hot.

"I beg you'll not link my name with a gauger's! I assure you I do not wish to share any virtue with him. 'Tis an odious trade in my opinion, and you and your mother must be fools to fancy that this man can be any friend to any of you. If he's as honest as you say, then friendship between Tresilians and him cannot be, unless Nick is going to turn fisherman in earnest. And if he's not honest, then I should——"

He broke off.

"But what nonsense we are talking! It is I, not you, that take this worthy person too seriously. Let us speak of ourselves. I think I must have the satisfaction of trouncing that dog, Newte. Or shall I leave it to your brother?"

"He's not worth it. Think no more of him. I scratched his face pretty deep."

"The wretch has got work with Egg for the moment," said Paul. "Now tell me about yourself and what you are thinking and whether you are still obdurate. What folly it is to keep me in the cold any longer, Faith. I love and worship you. I would give my life for you."

"And I mine for you," she answered. "Don't think I'd keep you in the cold. Don't think I'd lose any chance in the world to do you a service. But alas! the thing you want I——"

"Stop!" he cried, and held her hands in his. "Do not say it. Do not say that what I want most in the world you never can give, for I will not believe that.

I am patient—as patient as only a lover knows how to be. I will work to win your love; I will tear down mountains and swim seas to reach it. I only pray you keep an open mind and let nothing come between us. To do that is honest and fair; to do otherwise now would be cruel and unjust. I will brook no rival, Faith, for as we stand, you care so much for me that you would die for me. You have said it. And if that is not love, then it cannot fail to turn to love."

She sighed.

"I'm not clever and have few words," she said; "but I would that I could make you understand that all I say is true, and yet I do not love you as you would have me love you. I am grateful to you, Master Paul. You have been a wondrous friend to me and taught me a thousand things and made me wiser than any girl I know, except your own sister. And she has been a sister to me, too, and I have a fierce love for her. My life would be little to give for either of you, and I am dazzled to think that you can care for such a common thing as I am. Indeed I know what a mighty matter your love is, and I love you back, and am proud above measure to be your friend and sometimes fill an idle hour for you. But to be your wife is another case, and even if I loved you in that fashion, I should hesitate. It would be no sign of love to wed you, only a selfish thing at best. Our worlds must ever be different. Can you not see that?"

But he would hear no more of this. He was moody and suspicious. He longed to bid her see Pawlet no more, yet durst not for pride. She guessed something of what was in his mind; but she was proud too and felt no reason why she should bind herself, or give any undertaking. She lamented his attitude and knew not how to change it. A great silence presently fell between them. Then quite suddenly, in some gust of secret passion that the man himself could hardly have explained, he flung his arms round her and kissed her passionately.

"For God's sake love me—learn to love me unless you want to see me go mad!" he cried. "I am only

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flesh and blood. I cannot endure much more. And know this : if any, high or low, attempt to win you from me now, may Heaven have mercy upon them ! ”

With that he leapt up and left her ; and she, infinitely, sorrowful and indifferent as marble to his kisses, sat and mourned for him long after the sound of his footsteps had ceased upon the night.

CHAPTER X

MR. SIDEBOTTOM ON HIS ART

PAUL DESCHAMPS at this season began to occasion his mother more trouble than usual. He was secretive and strange, morose and fierce. Daily he grew more difficult to control, and the poor lady knew not how to comfort him. For she could form no idea of what ailed her son. His love affair was hidden from her, and though Honoree knew it, through Faith, she was forbidden by Paul to mention it to Madame Deschamps. But there were further matters on the young man's mind that none in Daleham knew, and these, in addition to his personal anxieties, served to make him turbulent and ill-mannered. Honoree guessed that her brother was being entrusted with some commission from France ; but she could form no idea of its nature. Her belief in Paul prevented her from feeling concern on the subject. She felt very sure that he would justify any trust placed in him by the Napoleonic party : she even hoped that danger and difficulty might await him, and that in time she would be called to share such danger and participate in the subsequent triumph. For she was a little bundle of romance and saw signs and wonders in every hedge-row, mystery in every ray of moonlight, or flash of lightning. Every beggar might be a prince in disguise ; every personable young man, a hero or villain in her eyes.

She had thought much upon Gilbert Oxenham since his departure, and was surprised and pleased to get a letter from him on an occasion when *The Grey Bird* put into Milford Haven for a couple of hours before returning to sea. He had gone ashore and written to her. The letter delighted Honoree, for it revealed a new cleverness in the amateur fisherman. It appeared to Mademoiselle

Deschamps that he commanded a most distinguished literary style, and she rated his letter very highly, not only because it had been written to her, but because she thought it picturesque and clever.

"He has more brains than we think for," she declared to her mother. "He has written a choice piece about the sea and the boat and those in her. The men who write the newspapers could not have done it better. There is the very tang of the waves upon it."

It seemed that young Oxenham was much in love with the sea and desired no better manner of life. "It is man's work," he wrote, "and has been a taste of real joy for me. To fight the big green seas, to beat them, to fetch home your trawl in half a gale of wind by the light of the moon; to scud to harbour when the Atlantic breaks loose and threatens, and to learn the wonder and magic of a true West Cornwall lugger—these have been glorious experiences. I am proud to tell that I have satisfied Tresilion's criticism. He is well pleased to have me in the boat, and even expresses regret that I am not there to stay! But perhaps I am! At any rate I do not leave *The Grey Bird* until Tresilion turns me out, and I do not think he will be in any haste to do that. The trawl is not a success. The drift-net is the proper gear for a lugger of this build. But a trawl is wonderful in itself and brings up most amazing things from the depth of ocean. I have a treasure or two, which I shall beg you to accept if you will honour me by so doing."

"Strange that so well born a man should love this dreadful life," declared Madame Deschamps. "Incredible indeed, for who would willingly go upon the sea that can keep off it?"

"'Tis in his blood," declared Honoreine. "His most famous ancestor, that fought the Spaniards with Drake, was a pirate; and Master Oxenham would be a pirate to-morrow if he could."

"He is in a fair way to become a smuggler instead, if he stops with Nicholas Tresilion," feared Honoreine's mother; but Paul doubted it.

"I would it were so; I should think better of him,"

declared the young man. "But on all sides one hears that Nicholas is going to follow the lead of the others and run contraband no more. This puppet with a hawk's face—what's his name?—the new exciseman—he has terrified every free trader in Daleham. They are all surrendering without firing a shot. Williams has sold his boat; Mutters is going to be a God-fearing crabber for evermore, and Caddell is buying new nets. Now Tresilion will do the like—cowards all. I weary of this place. It is full of old women."

"Gilbert Oxenham is no old woman, and there are other ways of doing man's work beside thieving," said Honorine hotly. "Heaven knows what is happening to you. You grow ill to live with, and are helping to turn our mother's hair grey."

He looked at her darkly.

"Have a care, sister," he said. "I am not used to such speeches, nor can I brook them."

"If you heard them oftener, it might be better for you, however. What have we done to suffer your whims and fancies? We are not wronging you; we are not making your life difficult. You deny us all knowledge of your affairs, and then, when they fall awry, you make us bear the burden of your temper. It is not fair, or just, to mother or to me."

"I do not deny you all knowledge of my affairs. The details, indeed I am not at liberty to name. But I have responsibilities that crush me, and I have private tribulations that are heavy on my shoulders. Do not judge me and do not ask me for more knowledge than I can impart. Much has been required of me—more than I can fulfil. I am a soldier, not a—" He broke off and left the ladies abruptly.

"He is meddling in politics," murmured Madame Deschamps. "And the people in France, who are seeking to use him, know not what a boy he is."

"It is not that: he is in love," declared Paul's sister. "I must not say more, and would not dare name it to him, mother. But most certainly he is in love, poor boy, and his love is not returned. He begins, no doubt, to perceive this; hence his humours."

Madame Deschamps sighed.

"How ill life falls on those I have loved best," she said. "Here is Selina Glanvil eating out her heart for Paul—I have her father's word. And now you fear that Paul has been repulsed elsewhere."

"It may come right," said Honoree. "We must hope and hope. Yet I think for many reasons that Paul had better not seek a wife yet awhile. He knows at heart that there will be more fighting before long in France. And when that happens, not twenty sweet-hearts will keep him in England."

"There is more than war, or the possibility of war," said Madame Deschamps. "He has had a dreadful quarrel with your cousin, Warner."

"That was bound to happen. He despises Warner for a coward. And so does everybody, for he is a coward."

"He has insulted Warner and is waiting for him to challenge him to a duel."

"Good gracious," cried Honoree, full of laughter. "I could have told Paul he was wasting his time. The lieutenant in a duel! Did Warner come running to you with the story?"

"No, but he told your uncle. And as a minister of the church, my brother spoke with no uncertain voice we may be sure."

"What on earth could Paul find to quarrel with Warner Baldwin about?" asked Honoree.

But her mother was not able to furnish any answer to that question.

Meantime Paul, moved by a sudden impulse, went out upon the cliffs. In reality he desired to meet the newcomer, who had been so abruptly thrust into his life; and now he sought on the coastguard walks for Robert Pawlet. But he did not confess so much to himself, nor did he know what he would have said to the man had he found him. Only a subordinate coastguard, telescope under arm, was tramping the winding cliff walk, and him Paul did not know. The man saluted, but he took no notice.

Restless and troubled he went next to see his Uncle

Upcott, but the vicar was from home. He had the satisfaction of passing and cutting Warner on the way out of the vicarage ; then he strode off to Daleham, talked awhile with acquaintances in the harbour, scoffed at the crabber, Mutters, for his reformation, sneered at another convert, in the shape of Caddell, and then strolled up the village to *The Sailors' Joy*, that he might have speech with Henry Sidebottom.

Tom Otter was in the bar reading a letter that Henry had received from Abel Hooker of *The Grey Bird*.

"Welcome, Master Deschamps," said the inn-keeper. "'Tis a month of Sundays since we saw you here. A letter has come from my crony, Hooker—him that sails with Nicholas Tresilion. Hooker's a cleverer man than most of us dream in these parts, and for all his hands are more like crab's claws, along of his calling, yet his penmanship is a great credit to such an ignorant person. They've had a good cruise and he wants me to advance his wife five shilling till he returns, which I am very willing to do. Master Oxenham has covered himself with glory."

"He is a great man, is Master Oxenham," declared Otter. "My stars ! what is there the gentleman can't do ? He'll shoot a woodcock or catch a salmon as well as any sportsman that ever I met with ; and as if that wasn't enough cleverness for one young gentleman, he rides to hounds so well as I do, and can draw a cover with the best. And now he's shining on the deep seemingly. Well, I'll give him best there. Let me have a horse, or else solid ground under me. A boat's a jumpy, beastly place at best of times in my opinion and there's only one thing I ever do when I get afloat."

"And so do I, Tom," confessed Henry. "I went out with John Tresilion once, just to get a taste of the fisherman's life, and see the Lord's wonders on the deep, and make a poem about them. But, in sober truth, I was soon in no case to make a poem. John shot a mile of drift net and we lay by 'em all night ; and what I shot ain't no matter ; but in human kindness they drew their nets and sailed some hours afore the proper time ;

because if they hadn't, I should never have lived to tell the tale."

" You didn't get nothing for ' the Volume ' that day then, Henry ? " asked Mr. Otter ; but Sidebottom declared that he had done so.

" Yes, a poem I made after all, though not at all the sort I meant to make," he said. " But we can't pick and choose in a mysterious business like poetry. The spirit didn't move on the face of the waters as I expected ; it moved in my stomach, and my stomach was what I made my poetry about, not the rolling deep and moonlight on the waves and the fisherman's life on the dark blue ocean and so on."

" If you could make poetry out of your stomach, you could make it out of anything," said Otter ; but Sidebottom cast a pitying glance upon him.

" And so I could, Tom. There's nothing in reason we poetical men can't turn into rhyme. And why not ? Everything have got its poetical side, from the sun in the sky to a dog scratching his ear. There's salt in everything, according to the sciences, and there's poetry in everything according to the arts. A tempest on the briny deep is a very solemn and wonderful thing, and nobody doubts it ; but the poet can show you that a tempest at the pit of the stomach is just as solemn and terrific."

" That's true enough," admitted Otter, " especially if 'tis your own stomach. I remember once after I'd eaten a shell crab——"

The sportsman's anecdote was lost, for there came into the bar Robert Pawlet. It was dusk and as yet Mr. Sidebottom had not lighted his lamps ; but he now did so and served the exciseman with a tumbler of spirits and water.

" Good liquor, gauger, but not above proof," said Henry.

" If you're lucky, you'll soon be on to a stronger tipple than Henry's gin," prophesied Otter. " But I hear some of our bold boys are shaking in their shoon a'ready. Your name's a tower of strength, Mister Pawlet. I'm thinking you'll soon be weary of Daleham,

for a busy man like you won't find enough work to make you sleep o' nights."

"I don't sleep o' nights," answered the other. "That's the time when me and my mates be widest awake. If Lees hadn't slept o' nights—however, I'm not here to brag, and I'm not here to harry any honest man. I'm as well content to earn my money peacefully as you are. And if I can, so much the better for me."

"You'll find us a friendly, easy sort of men, I assure you," said Otter. "Live and let live is the motto of Daleham."

"But it's not the motto for a gauger," answered Mr. Pawlet. "I've got to do my duty as well as I can, and everybody knows what my duty is. But I don't want my duty to come between me and any man's friendship if it can be helped. I'll be friendly with all that want my friendship; but if I found my best friend on earth was a smuggler, then I'd leave no stone unturned to catch him and get him put away. Duty's one thing and friendship's another—and duty's first. So everybody knows where he stands with me I hope. I can't be bought. I don't say it for vanity, and because it's a rare thing. I merely say it because it's true. No credit to me: I'm built so."

Then Paul Deschamps spoke. "You talk big, exciseman; but be warned. Belike you have your price after all, and we shall live to see you take it."

"Nay, sir; I'm no braggart," answered the other. "I might be rich to-day if I was a knave. The young woman, Miss Faith Tresilion—she asked me what I thought when I was told that her father killed Lees and was killed by him. 'Now,' said she, 'you'll darken our doors no more.' But I told her that I kept duty and friendship in different compartments, and would be her friend and her brother's friend if they willed, while I left no stone unturned to lay her brother by the heels, if I caught him smuggling."

"'Tis contrary to human nature and so you'll find it," prophesied the inn-keeper. "Life don't run on such a simple pattern as that. Defend me from a friend who'd send me to prison if he could."

"Only if you deserved it, master. 'Tis fair and cuts both ways. Everybody in Daleham knows my business now. They can take me or leave me, but they can't tamper with me. For why? I'm an ambitious man and want to make a name for myself."

"You have done," said Tom Otter. "You're properly hated by the free traders, and there's one or two in clink this minute who'll want your address terrible bad when they come out again."

"So don't count on the people tumbling over each other to be your friends, Mister Pawlet," warned Henry Sidebottom. "You win the wenches and then you'll

"He's doing that," said Tom. "If I didn't see him in the garden at Mother Tresilion's yesterday planting bloody warriors for Miss Faith!"

The ghost of a blush passed over Pawlet's eagle face;

"So you did. I fetched 'em for her, and she did me the honour to accept of 'em. There's no nonsense in the young woman nor yet in her mother. They know my business, and yet they like me very well and haven't took away the friendship I won before they knew who I was."

"It remains to be seen if Nick will feel quite so kindly, especially when he hears your idea of friendship," said Sidebottom.

"No man wants to harbour with a snake," declared Paul. "He'll scorn such friendship and dare you inside his door! You follow a very vile trade to my thinking, and I pity those that seek to make you a friend. As well neighbour with bullies and crimps and the press gang, or any such cowards, who yelp in packs and make up by numbers what they lack in pluck. No decent man or woman should have any truck with a gauger."

The other flushed at this harsh challenge. But it was a gentleman who spoke and a man of discipline who listened.

"I'm vexed to think you hold me so low, sir," he said. "I've never heard till this minute that mine is work man need blush to do. You are young, master; belike you'll think better of it some day"

"I'm a soldier," answered Paul, "and to a soldier such underhand, nocturnal warfare as yours is mean and base."

He withdrew and Otter expressed surprise.

"My patience, what's come over our young Frenchy! One would think he'd got a quarrel with you on his own account, Robert Pawlet."

"And so one would, Mr. Otter. But 'tis certain sure that he cannot. I've only seen him once afore in all my life. But mayhap his friends are on the other side, and so he's none too pleased that I've come to put things right here and get the Government back a bit of its own."

"Bless you, he's above such peddling matters as brandy and baccy. He's a soldier and have fought for Boney and may again. His father was a famous hero by all accounts, though his mother's no more than just a kind lady and the vicar's sister. And that minds me why I come in, Henry. Doctor Baldwin have felt his liver scrouging at him a bit these late days, and he wants fifty minutes on horseback and, maybe, another fifty after that. So we go hunting to-morrow, and I hope you'll be among us, for a field ain't a field without you and your great white mare."

Mr. Sidebottom was gratified.

"Thank you for those words, Tom Otter. I've never been in at the death in all my life, and don't hope to be; but I yield to none in my admiration of the sport, and I do the best that a sixteen-stone man, who cannot tide a blood horse, may be asked to do."

"We meet at the Quarry," said Tom.

CHAPTER XI

ABEDNEGO EGG

DOCTOR BALDWIN and his nephew, Lieutenant Baldwin, rode to the meet through Daleham Combe beside the river. Far up the valley, towering above the grey boughs of naked oak and beech, ascended the red sandstone cliffs of a disused quarry, now the home of hawks and jackdaws.

The vicar spoke earnestly.

" You deceive yourself, nephew, and seek to hide yourself behind Mother Church—from no regard for her, from no reverence for her sanctity ; but because, in plain English, you are a coward. What does Fuller say to the soldier ? ' If a danger meets him as he walks in his vocation, he neither stands still, starts aside, nor steps backward, but either goes over it with valour, or under it with patience.' Now that I conceive to be the predicament in which you stand. You have been practically thrust into a position from which the only honourable escape is a duel. But you assert religious scruples, and while, in another man I might be willing enough to believe this ; in you, I do not. You are unprepared to ' go over it with valour,' but the alternative, to ' go under it with patience,' is equally unpleasant to you. In other words you won't fight and you won't say you are sorry. Paul, for reasons you do not divulge, tweaked your nose—a most insulting and offensive exhibition of scorn. But you tell me that, on religious grounds, you think it wrong to answer as a gentleman should, and you are equally unprepared to apologise for the conduct, whatever it may have been, which caused your cousin to perform so unfriendly an action. Think

not that I smile on the duello—far from it ; but there is a sort of peace which can only be the outcome of baseness, and while, as a humble agent of the Lord, I should do all in my power to arrest and interrupt any meeting between you and your cousin, the purpose of which was to shed blood, as an English gentleman, and as a Baldwin, I tell you that you must either fight, or——”

“ So be it,” said the other, with a great show of ferocity. “ You teach me my duty, sir. And God help Paul Deschamps when he comes in range of my pistol.”

But the vicar was not deceived. He had taken his nephew’s measure very thoroughly and, indeed, would not have pressed the duel, had he not known the young man was quite unequal to any such enterprise.

“ With respect to your pistol, you are premature, nephew. It is strange that a minister of peace should have to instruct a man of war in such an elementary matter ; but since you will challenge, the choice of weapons lies with your opponent. Paul, like many of his countrymen, is a magician with the rapier, and will doubtless make choice of that weapon.”

There was something a little monkey-like and mischievous in the doctor’s eye as he uttered these remarks ; but he pressed the matter of the duel for more reasons than one. And chiefly because he thought that it might frighten the lieutenant away from the vicarage altogether. He had come very cordially to dislike his nephew and wished him gone, yet could not break the laws of hospitality by bidding him depart.

To the description of Paul’s sword-craft Warner made no answer. Then a figure challenged the horsemen, and some distance ahead, not far from the door of his own dwelling-house by Dale river, they perceived the venerable and rounded shape of Abednego Egg.

He was perched on the top rail of a gate and sat humped up with his shoulders and knees near together and his white beard hanging down between his legs. He smoked and appeared in an excellent temper.

“ There sits the worst man in Daleham—like Humpty

Dumpty," said Doctor Baldwin, "and for my part if he 'had a bad fall'—if, in fact the Egg were broken, so that all the king's horses and all the king's men could not put him together again, it would be little loss to the country side. I have endeavoured for thirty years to reclaim that man, but I have failed."

"They call him a witch and declare that he can work evil at a distance," said Warner, regarding the venerable sinner with interest.

"That he can work evil at a distance is most certain," returned his uncle. "Indeed it is a quality of all evil to widen out, like the rings in the water where a stone is thrown. None may limit the range of an evil deed. He is held to be a wizard, and many strange things are reported by those unlucky enough to incur his anger."

"But do you believe these stories, Uncle Upcott?"

"How can I disbelieve? The Word is very explicit on the subject. There are those who traffic with the powers of darkness. There have ever been such—both men and women—and, from what I hear of Egg, there can be no question that, for reasons hidden from us, he is permitted to do evil and torment certain innocent persons. Elsewhere, too, one hears strange rumours of unquiet spirits aloft at Hordell's Hall. These things undoubtedly occur. Spirits walk, and I have often considered whether it is not my duty to intervene and lay these unquiet visions in the name of Christianity. Think not that I am unconscious of much that is afoot. With respect to Egg, he has the powers of right against him, and, in God's time, I shall certainly prevail in that quarter, if not in others."

"What does he do?"

"It is the exercise of the Evil Eye. Strange that one so aged should contain these secret founts of malignity and apparently possess power to project his venom like the fabled serpent; but so it is. Of old he was a wrecker, and glories in his ancient villainies to this day. Now he helps the smugglers, for, despite his years, he is tough and full of vitality. You shall hear me speak with him. He is ever polite, but sometimes I think that had I Ithuriel's spear to prod him withal, the

ancient wretch would turn into a reptile and proclaim the spirit he serves."

A mile behind the riders came others of the hunt, with pedestrians also to witness the meet. From the valley, still faint and far away, rose the melancholy sound of Tom Otter's horn, where he rode with his hounds.

Bad Egg alighted from the gate as Doctor Baldwin arrived at it and greeted him.

"Give you good morning, Abednego Egg. It is well to see you innocently employed and sitting in the sunshine. Did you seek the honest daylight oftener, it might cleanse the cobwebs in your heart, Abednego, for vile things swiftly perish where the light of heaven is allowed to stream."

"Always in the right, your Reverence," answered the old man. "A very tower of strength art thou, and not the least of us be forgotten in your prayers they tell me. And what I say is that we poor, black sheep will all be forgiven some day, and the sinners pardoned to a man—for the sake of such a holy saint as you."

"I see through you, Egg; I see through you," retorted the vicar. "Your substance is as muddy as your sins are scarlet; but I see through you. The Italians have a vexatious trick, to make fun of a man to his face, yet in words so civil that none can take umbrage. Words that sound monstrous polite in other ears fall on the victim's like a scourge. Indeed I am too fond of the game myself, so cannot censure you."

The ancient man blinked and assumed a semi-idiotic expression before these remarks.

"I knew an Italian once," he said. "A ship had the misfortune to be wrecked near by where me and my father lived, and one Italian came ashore alive. He was a very nice man till he died. Then we buried him with the other dead folk in the churchyard, and put up the figure head of their ship as a monument for 'em. I doubt it's there yet if it haven't rotted away."

The doctor was about to ride forward when Abednego spoke again.

"Talking of corpses, your honour's Reverence, reminds

me that my poor, old wife, Milly, died at dawn this morning."

The clergyman nearly fell off his horse with astonishment.

"Good heavens! I saw her but yesterday afternoon and she promised to bring me some watercresses."

"She can't now," said Mr. Egg, "because she's gone dead. We've had our coffins by us for years and years, and I've put her into her coffin with these hands. Perhaps you'll step in and take a look at her. She was down drinking with that female mountain, Mother Tresilion, last night; but not another drop will ever pass her lips again, because she's gone dead."

Doctor Baldwin, in no small concern, alighted and entered the den of the Eggs, to find poor Milly laid out in a red flannel nightgown. The coffin was on the kitchen table, but the lid was not screwed down. It stood in a corner. The dead woman's hands were crossed in her lap and a penny piece covered each of her eyes. A black cat jumped off the table as they entered. The doctor regarded the old woman with attention. He felt grave doubts. Her colour was not cadaverous; he almost fancied that her lean bosom moved. He touched her hand, but it was very cold.

Going to the door he bade Warner gallop down and seek a physician.

"Budd may be riding to meet," he said; "but if you do not find him, then hasten to his house and bid him come to me at Egg's, the coffin-maker's, cottage with all possible despatch."

Warner rode off, leaving the bridle of Doctor Baldwin's horse in its master's hands. He hitched it to the wall and re-entered the house.

"I am in grave doubts whether poor Milly has really passed," said he, but the widower assured him that it was so.

"She's dead now," he declared. "A matter of two hour ago, she wasn't, for she gave a wriggle and heaved a sigh and the pennies falled off. So I spoke pretty sharp to her. 'Be quiet and die like a lady, Milly!'

I said to the woman. And she knew the master's voice and obeyed. A very obedient creature always."

The other regarded him with horror. Infinite pity for the poor wretch in her coffin held him spell-bound. Then indignation loosed his tongue and he rated the old man very sharply. Bad Egg regarded the irate vicar malevolently and resented his criticism.

" 'Tis no business of yours whether or no," he cried, " and for you to poke in here and make all this damn noise in the presence of the dead be a very odious thing. And the sooner you get outside, the better pleased I'll be."

But the clergyman refused to budge, and presently, on the arrival of the hounds, Doctor Budd by good chance appeared and examined the coffin-maker's wife.

She was not dead ; but the business of getting her out of her coffin and attempted restoration proved too much for the aged woman's frail thread of existence. It snapped and Mr. Egg was indeed a widower. He took the news with ferocious humour and declared it a lesson to people to mind their own business. Then, almost before the last pink coat and tardy hound had gone, Mr. Egg bundled the dust of poor Milly back into her coffin and screwed the lid on, muttering and cursing very heartily while he did so.

Elsewhere, though the furze brakes above the quarry harboured a good fox, who took an easy line and pointed his mask inland, one at least of the field rode with a mind unoccupied by the excitements of the chase. Warner Baldwin found the subject of Abednego Egg and his occult powers of evil exceedingly attractive. He had not believed the rumours until hearing his uncle solemnly credit them ; but on the strength of the doctor's assertion, the matter returned to his thoughts and clung there very stoutly. His nature turned by instinct to the subterranean and sinister. He did not acknowledge to his own heart the thought that now actuated him, but at least he desired better knowledge of Egg, and judging rightly that money would be a sure passport to the old man's respectful attention, felt that

with his purse in his pocket, he might present himself at the coffin-maker's without fear of ill welcome.

The idea once formed he determined to act upon it without delay, and made up his mind to visit the widower that night. His purpose in so doing was vague, and he preferred not to dwell upon it for the present. Yet well he knew that not mere curiosity was taking him to the wizard. He kept his intention a profound secret, assisted at the run, paid court to Jennie Glanvil, who was out, and conducted himself as agreeably as he knew how. Then, when evening came and he dined alone with his uncle, he brought up the subject of his duel with Paul and declared that, much to his sorrow, he felt that no course now remained save to go through with it.

But Doctor Baldwin, weary with his run, found himself in no mood for further conversation on this theme or any other. He retired earlier than usual, and as soon as his nephew was free to do so, he left the vicarage, descended to the valley and presently presented himself at the coffin-maker's.

It was eleven o'clock when he reached the abode of Mr. Egg, and found very much to his astonishment that another visitor already occupied the old man's attention. His cousin stood with his back to the kitchen fire, and Warner just observed him in time to retreat unseen. For he was passing the window and looking into the lighted room when he made his discovery, while those within could not observe him. Much wondering what had brought Paul to this place, the lieutenant fell back and hid in the shadow of a thicket by the brink of Dale until he should depart. Nor had he long to wait. Deschamps appeared presently and Warner heard his last words to Egg, who followed him to the threshold.

"This week without fail, or I'll seek another messenger. It is impossible for me to go myself at present!"

"In a very few days it shall be, your honour. Have no fear. Widowed and alone I am, but nought shall come between. I'd rather let the dead bury their dead than disappoint your honour."

Thus Abednego whined until Paul had passed beyond earshot; whereupon Warner came from his hiding-

place, knocked at the old man's door and entered without being invited to do so.

"Drat the people, can't a man be left alone with his dead wife?" he began. Then the last visitor silenced him.

"Have no fear that I come to waste your time; on the contrary, you shall be a gainer by me. If my cousin can pay you well for your services, then so can I. You are old and reputed very wise. Then your time is worth more than another's. Here's a guinea to show that I'm in earnest."

"Spoke like a sojer, my noble captain! That's the proper way to treat an old man, and God knows you won't be the loser."

"Plenty more where that came from. Does my young frog-eating cousin pay as well?"

"What he pays and what he don't pay is no matter, Captain. Be sure that I earn his money. He's hard to please and pushes my old bones a bit; but though his Reverence, your uncle, has always got a rap for my poor old knuckles, I bear him no grudge for it and would do him a service to-morrow if it came in my power. I set great store by the Baldwin family, young gentleman, and be only too proud to have the chance to help man or woman among 'em."

"And what is cousin Paul putting upon you? His tone was harsh as he left you. One should not talk to an old man so."

"Most true, Captain. But he is young and his mind is full of great matters. I do not love your cousin Paul, Captain, nor does he love me. He treats me like a dog, but he pays me to fetch and carry, so enough said."

Warner was itching to learn more, but guessed that a direct question would be parried. He hesitated to display animosity towards Paul for fear of putting Mr. Egg on his guard, yet he felt a burning desire to follow up the relations between this bad old man and the fierce and fiery young one.

"Take care—be warned, gaffer," he said. "I bear my cousin no ill will; but he is fond of mystery and intrigue. Such a man would be instantly suspected if

we fell out again with France. He is not one of us, remember, and as a Frenchman we cannot trust him, handsome and charming though he may be."

The other considered this saying.

"I'm only a humble old man," he said. "I know nothing about the gentleman's affairs, and do no more than any other tranter might do for him. 'Tis part of my business to go into Plymouth once a week for stores and such like; and I carry packets for him and bring back packets. He corresponds with France, but not by the public post. There's a fishing sloop from Havre that puts into the Barbican with her catches pretty oft, and she brings and takes letters for the young gentleman every few weeks. He was in here ramping just now, because I didn't drive to Plymouth to-day. But if a man's wife dies, he can't just go on his rounds as if nothing had happened. Besides the boat ain't due for a week I believe."

At this moment another entered the room, and Elijah Newte appeared.

"Be there anything more for me to do?" he asked, and his master made answer—

"Not to-night, Elijah; but to-morrow, or the next day, or maybe the next, you've got to go to Plymouth. I can't, because it will be expected of me to bide along with my poor dead wife till she's put underground; but young Frenchy's been here threatening to stop supplies if his packet don't go to Plymouth, and the one that he reckons is waiting for him don't come back. There's that, and chores to do for me likewise. You'll need to buy me some extra fine victuals for the funeral feast at the same time, for I be going to do it in my best manner—poor though I am. The difference between a Cornish wake and a Devon one be just this. In Cornwall we used to get drunk afore the burying, and in Devon we don't get drunk till after. And when you've weighed up the advantages and disadvantages, I reckon the Devon way's best. So that's how we'll do it."

While the old blackguard maulderned on, Warner used his wits. Any nebulous idea of enlisting the wizard's services against Deschamps was dismissed. Indeed so

superstitious a fancy appeared contemptible from the soldier's present standpoint. For the moment he was more interested in Elijah Newte than the sailor's master, and his line of thought appeared from his next speech.

"When your cart goes to Plymouth, you might do me a service too. I have to call at the barracks about some business presently. How long do you take to get there?"

"'Tis a three hours' job with the wagon; but 'twill be the tilt cart for this," said Mr. Egg. "And you can book in it as well as another. The fare's a crown there and back."

"I'll keep you company then," said Warner to Mr. Newte. "And the sooner you start the better for me."

It was arranged that the journey should be made three days hence and that Baldwin should pick up the tilt cart at a point half a mile outside Daleham. Then he paid for his fare in advance, refused an invitation to drink and went on his way.

Whereto the enterprise might lead he knew not; but greatly he hoped that it would lead to something.

CHAPTER XII

MR. PAWLET PRAISES "THE GREY BIRD"

CHANCE willed at this season that Robert Pawlet found himself faced with greater problems than he had expected Daleham to furnish. He was an honest man, and when he discovered that his first friends in the village were those he might have expected to be his prime enemies, he stated the case in plain words to Mrs. Tresilion and left her to decide. The old woman, however, made no demur about the matter. She bade Robert judge people as he found them, and not refuse friendship until he was obliged to do so.

"What my dear, dead saint was, everybody knows," she said; "and if his opinion on the subject of the Customs ain't the same as yours, so much the worse for you. But he's gone to a place where nothing is taxed, and if free trade is good enough for the Golden City, it ought to be good enough for Daleham. And as for my son, you'll find him a straightforward, honest young fisherman, well thought upon by every brave man and decent woman. So you take my advice and be our friend until you find you've got to be our enemy. Don't you let other people do your judging for you, but keep an open mind."

The cunning old creature saw far further than Pawlet in the matter, and indeed, with an instinct almost uncanny, she had judged from their first meeting that circumstances were going to complicate the exciseman's position in a way that Pawlet himself as yet little guessed. But she was right, and time swiftly proved it.

For his part, on the occasion when Emma spoke thus, the young man agreed with her.

"'Tis English law to judge every man innocent until

he's proved guilty, and that's the English way of looking at life in general, or should be," he declared. "And I come here, firstly to re-organize the coast defence and make it smarter and better up to its work, and secondly to catch the smugglers if I can. And what I'm going to do and the little games I'm going to put up against their little games is hid in my head for the present. But if there are smugglers here, high or low, catch 'em I will if I'm able, and if there are not, so much the more credit to Daleham and the less labour for me."

Mrs. Tresilion applauded these sentiments.

"No honest man be going to quarrel with that," she declared. "Least of all my Nicholas. He owns a pretty boat by the name of *The Grey Bird*; and where she fished and what she caught in the life of my dead saint is old history now. All I want is for you and my boy to be friends, and very wishful and willing he'll be, especially when he hears how you did your poor best for his sister against that overgrown imp of Satan that used to sail with us."

Thus the matter was left, and then Faith, who, for reasons she could not have explained, often found herself walking on the coastguard men's path at this season, fell in with Mr. Pawlet again and asked after his chin.

He was obviously gratified to meet with her, and begged that she would favour him with a little conversation; while she, not unwilling, invited him to sit on the turf at cliff edge.

"There's a place beneath us—a bit of a goyle—where a rare flower grows," she said. "'Tis common up the country they tell me, but seldom to be met with in these parts, and when you came along, Mr. Pawlet—and fine you look in your blue and brass buttons if you'll let me say so—I was just going down over to see if any leaves were putting out yet. Cowslips are the flowers I speak about. Of course 'tis too early for them yet."

"Good powers!" he said, "you don't mean you would go down that precipice for the sake of a flower!"

She laughed.

"I'm as lithe as a deer and sure-footed as a coney," she told him. "I can look up or down without turning a hair and hold on by my eyelids if need be."

"But for a nosegay! I wouldn't let you run no such risk if you belonged to me, young woman."

"I belong to none—free as air and always shall be," she answered; "and as for the cowslips, they are not to look at, but for a purpose. We make cowslip wine—'tis a very favourite drink of my mother's."

Now it was the man's turn to laugh.

"Excuse me smiling, but somehow—cowslip wine—it don't sound the sort of tipple that fine old lady would care about."

Faith laughed at this too, and that subtle electricity which belongs to a piece of merriment shared, was not wanting to their amusement. The laugh drew them closer.

She regarded his chin and shook her head.

"You'll be marked for life."

"Maybe. What matter? 'Tis only a scratch across the point. He wore a ring."

"Yes! The hulking brute—a ring my father gave him. He's clever in a boat and has been in sailing ships in his time. He knew the coast of France very well and—"

She broke off.

"Have you been up on Daleham Head yet?" she asked.

"I have, but only once. I mean to go again and explore the ground more thoroughly. Of course you know every inch of it?"

"I do, and all those unfinished forts as well. If you are a proper coastguard, you ought to look to them and pull them down or fill them up. There's dangerous places there."

A great inspiration fired him.

"Perhaps next time you are bound that way, you would be so good as to let me know, and I'd keep you company and ask you to show me the dangerous places."

She did not answer, for there was mirrored in her bright eyes a vessel on the sea. Her lips tightened and

she pointed where a lugger had just cleared the cliffs of Daleham Head.

"Look!" she said. "D'you see her?"

"Aye—a little Cornish lugger—with a jib—that's unusual."

"'Tis *The Grey Bird* back from 'round land,'" said Faith. "I must get down and tell mother."

"She won't be in for an hour yet," he said. "If you be pleased to bide five minutes, I'll climb down the goyle and see if the cowslips are beginning to put forth leaves."

But Faith took no notice of his offer.

"I'm very much hoping you'll like my brother," she told him. "For a dearer chap don't walk. You're a bit like him in some things. Not in face—he's not so good-looking as you—but in your way of looking at life. He's a very sporting man and not afraid of anything on two legs."

"I hope he'll do what I couldn't, and give that rascal as dared to insult you a proper good hiding."

"The worst of Elijah Newte is that none can hide him," answered she. "However, his time will come. Every coward is found out sooner or later. I dare say you'll have the pleasure of thrashing him yet for me."

"I'd do more than that for you, miss."

"You can call me 'Faith' if you've a mind to," she said.

"'Tis the most beautiful word in the language in my judgment, but not too good for the name of such a maiden as you. And I'm sure I feel it a terrible great honour to be allowed to use it."

"'Tis my whim for the moment; but I may recall it."

"I'll do nothing to make you. And don't fear I'd use it in company—that would be too on-coming."

She laughed suddenly, with her eyes on her brother's boat.

"I'm thinking what a funny world it is," she said, "and I'm wondering what Nick will look like when he hears our new friend's the new gauger."

"I hope 'twill mean nothing to him," said the man earnestly. "I feel very kind to your family. Never before did I neighbour with strangers so comfortable."

And it would be a very great sorrow to me to think we should ever fall out."

"It depends on you," she answered. "Nicholas is the most harmless of chaps. He won't fall out with you, if you don't with him. It takes two to make a quarrel."

"Not if you're a gauger."

They walked awhile in silence. Then he spoke again.

"Faith," he said. "Faith—excuse me if I roll it on my tongue a bit, for 'tis so beautiful; but if I call you by your name, is it too much for me to ask you to call me by mine? Could you call me 'Robert'—just now and again when we meet by accident, same as to-day?"

"Yes," she answered. "That's fair give and take. 'I'll call you 'Robert' now and then. And now I'll wish you 'good-bye,' Robert, if you please."

"I don't please. I don't want to say 'good-bye' to you. I'm very wishful to pleasure you. And there was a question I meant to ask. The young French gentleman—him that met us back-along and didn't seem none too pleased and scowled a bit at me—at least so I fancied. Is he a friend of your family?"

"Yes—you may say that he is. He likes me very much—in fact he's in love with me."

Mr. Pawlet stared and changed colour. His emotions were not hidden, but the girl took no note of them.

"His sister is my friend too. 'Tis a proud thing for me having such friends. I'd do anything for them in my power."

"Then you'll wed the gallant man and turn into a French woman," he said blankly.

"That's not in my power, because I couldn't marry where I didn't love."

"Poor man! All his fine havage and fine face don't count then?"

"Not to make me love him. I owe him a lot and I'd pay the debt. I'd do anything for him or his sister. I'd give him my life even, but not myself. That's how I feel to him."

Pawlet shook his head mournfully.

"It won't end there," he declared. "If you feel so much as that, you'll get to love the chap in time, and then you'll marry him and turn into the finest lady in the land. Not that you ban't that already. But I mean in the matter of frills and furbelows."

"I shouldn't be any finer a bird for fine feathers. No, I don't love Master Paul—and yet I won't say that neither. I love him, like I love Nicholas. I feel as if he was a brother."

"I've marked him about. I passed him but yesterday, and he didn't know me again. He has a troubled face for such a young gentleman. But maybe you've told me the reason for that," said the other.

She, however, denied it.

"Love is never the first business of you men—at least not the sort of men we women like the best. Love-hunters there be among you I grant; but we despise that sort up our sleeves. We like the men that have gotten men's work in hand and a bit of mystery about 'em—aye, and a secret or two they won't share with us. And as for him, he has plenty besides me to fret him. He's a Napoleon's man, to begin with, and longing and hoping for his master to be free. He's fought in France and pines to be fighting again. Then he's got to fight a duel too—with his own cousin—and he's only waiting for Master Warner Baldwin to challenge him."

"All that's light as air. All that's nothing to a fine man if he's won the girl he loves," said Mr. Pawlet. "Such things as fighting, and dangers, and plots, and counterplots be all just everyday stuff and not worth a thought if a man's tokened to the woman of his choice and feels that her heart is his."

"You talk as if you knew, Robert," said Faith; "perhaps you do for that matter."

"I do most certainly. I've seen it work to a miracle. Love makes a timid man brave and a quiet man noisy and a dumb man a chatterbox and a glum man a gay one. It alters character and enlarges the heart. I've seen a close man generous when things were going well with his courting; I've seen a shy man as bold as brass; and many such like wonderful changes come over

'em. But for my own part, I can't speak from experience as I tell you."

"Would love make a careful man careless or a busy man idle, think you?" she asked, and Mr. Pawlet judged that it might do so.

"There's a sort of light men would let love come between them and their duty no doubt," he admitted; "but not me. Without vain boasting, if I loved a precious maid and she loved me, it would prick me into being twice the man I am, and I'd double my duty and do ten men's work—just for joy of being alive and in the heart of my girl."

Faith Tresilion seemed a little moved by these sentiments.

"You're a fine, sensible fellow, I reckon," she said, "and you've got your share of wits without a doubt. I dare say when you have time, you'll begin to think of a wife for yourself. There's plenty of nice maidens in Daleham."

He considered, made as though about to speak, but changed his mind. For a while he watched *The Grey Bird*. Then he praised her.

"My patience! She's fast! And so she ought to be with such lines. A picture and no mistake! A Marazion boat-builder launched her if I know anything."

"I'm going down to tell mother and meet Nicholas," said Faith. "And if you like to drop in and have a talk after tea to-night—"

The man showed a hungry face.

"Gladly—gladly I would; but I can't. I've got an appointment down the coast."

She considered.

"Come to us instead, Robert—I want you to come," she said.

"Thankfully I'd come; but it can't be."

"I should have thought if a woman made a favour of it—"

"Don't put it so. You know I'd like nothing so well; but I can't play when I ought to be working."

She was not annoyed, but pretended to be.

"Good-bye then. I shan't ask you again."

"I hope you will."

She left him looking exceedingly dejected ; but had the man possessed power to peep into her heart, his regret might have vanished, for he would have found himself there.

"'Tis very well for him not to come when I beg," she thought, "but he'll be there none the less, for I can't get him out of my mind, the beautiful creature ; and I don't want to get him out for that matter neither."

Thus she made frank confession to herself, then laughed at herself and hastened home.

Mrs. Tresilion had been much upset by the loss of her life-long friend, poor Milly Egg, but the news of her son's return cheered her somewhat. She bade Faith bring out her black satin and the widow's cap with streamers. Then she lighted her pipe, put on all her wonderful rings and prepared to welcome her boy. News of *The Grey Bird*'s arrival had swiftly spread, and by the time that Faith reached the quay a dozen others interested in the boat were already assembled.

Abel Hooker had a wife who now came to greet him ; Monk Karswill's wife and two bairns were also there, and Dick Copleston's brother and sister. Apart loafed Elijah Newte, for the moment free, while also standing not far distant were Selina and Jennie Glanvil, with Honorine Deschamps and her brother. They had come to meet Gilbert Oxenham after his adventure.

The Grey Bird was soon at her moorings with her great red lug down. Then a boat dropped overboard and the crew came ashore. All were well and apparently cheerful ; but on his way home with Faith, Nicholas confessed that he desired a little more salt to life than was afforded by the regular business of a fisherman, and elsewhere Monk Karswill grumbled to his wife that a successful run to France was worth six months of knocking about in the North Channel, or hunting mackerel in stormy seas west of Scilly. Hooker, too, on returning to his cottage, confided to his family that he preferred the old business and believed that Tresilion would soon go back to it ; while the last hand, Richard Copleston, the special chum of Nicholas, spoke with frank regret of a

wasted fortnight representing small profits and poor returns for enormous labour.

Indeed only one person appeared to regard the cruise with unmixed content, and that was Gilbert Oxenham. He departed with the ladies and never wearied of telling his adventures. Genuine enthusiasm marked the youth's recital of his experiences. He was full of delight at the varied incidents of a fortnight's rough weather on the open sea ; he laughed at the miseries and inconveniences ; he rejoiced on the successful occasions when the trawl came up heavy laden ; and explained at great length, with technicalities quite lost on his hearers, why *The Grey Bird* was not suited to drag this particular fashion of net. He had brought them all curiosities drawn from the depths, and before leaving Honorine, promised that he would walk over to "Four Oaks" at a later hour to display some of these. Then he went off with Selina and Jennie to Tudor Towers, and since they were now quite aware that the young man's heart was hopelessly lost to Honorine, they welcomed him as a brother and were well content to have him with them. Sir Simeon also liked the young man well and found him of service in many ways, but chiefly by reason of his cheerful and optimistic nature.

The baronet heard of all that had happened to Gilbert, declared that he had missed the cheerful youth, and hoped that he would not soon be tempted away from land again. The youngster, however, declared that he was far from being weary of the sea and had made Nicholas promise to let him sail once more at no distant date.

That night Oxenham duly proceeded to "Four Oaks" and was not sorry to find Paul from home. He valued his company, but there was other company that he valued more.

Honorine and her mother were together, when the youth appeared and Anna Deschamps listened to the full recital of all that had happened to him, while Honorine applauded his valour and was breathless before his adventures. Then, the mother, knowing very well how matters stood, took occasion to leave them together

awhile, for her heart was tender and she remembered the days of her own youth.

To Gilbert's disappointment, however, Honорine proved more concerned for another than herself. She was full of Paul, and while that subject by no means interested the lover as compared with Honорine, yet the girl's brother led to a great matter after all.

" You remember," she said, " how you challenged me to set you some mighty task, worthy a giant? Modesty is no weakness of yours I fear, Master Oxenham; and yet mayhap that is as well, for I want you to be brave above all things."

" I'd fight the world in arms for you," he said.

" There are battles we do not fight with arms," she answered, " and since you demand it, I will set you a task, and one very near my heart too. I speak of my dear brother, who is passing through dark places and labours with doubts and difficulties of which I know nothing. I feel bitterly for Paul in his friendlessness. Not, indeed, that all men are not his friends in one sense. At least I think he has no enemies. But an inner friend, one to cheer him and hearten him and lift him above his ceaseless brooding and dark dreaming—there is no such man in his life as that. A woman—even a sister who worships him—cannot share his life; such a man as you might; and I call upon you to seek out Paul and win his confidence and be his friend—for my sake."

" I shall rejoice to try with might and main," he declared. " You could set me no task more agreeable."

" And none more difficult. Think not that it will be an easy matter. He is suspicious by nature, and doubly so just now. He has a world of secrets on his mind. You will need tact, patience and unlimited good humour to win him. And remember above all things that you set out entirely on your own account, without a whisper that you have been inspired to the attempt. If he thought that, your chances would perish for ever. At best they are not light, for he does not seek intimates and has never made a friend of a man to my knowledge. It happens, however, that he may want you ere long

and will himself seek you, for there is a whisper of a difference between him and his cousin, Baldwin, that cannot be settled amicably."

Oxenham rejoiced in these facts and promised that he would do all a man might to earn the esteem and trust of Honoreine's brother. The romance of the situation especially attracted her, and he glowed with satisfaction to see how she trusted him and how she undertook to work with him in secret. Most needless and elaborate plans the young woman was prepared to make. No simple or straightforward way appealed to her, if the same results might be achieved in a romantic manner. She breathed the very atmosphere of story-books and her plans for the future were rather the result of reading and dreaming than based on reasonable procedure. The youth, however, loved her and stayed not to consider. They plotted where no plots were necessary ; they arranged for secret meetings when not the least necessity for secrecy existed. And Paul's welfare and safety were the matters in hand. In reality neither the one nor the other was for the moment threatened ; but a time fast approached when he would need the succour of his friends ; and the plots and plans of Honoreine, begun in a simple, girlish love of adventure, were elevated to a very substantial significance when the days of trial came.

CHAPTER XIII

A SUPPER PARTY

ELSEWHERE Nicholas came before his mother and received her blessing. There belonged, of course, no special interest to his return, since the going or coming of the boats was an everyday matter in the homes of the fisher folk ; but though he had little of particular interest to impart, plenty of news awaited him, and his mother insisted on telling all that had occurred in her own way. There was more indeed than even Mrs. Tresilion knew, but for the present her information proved sufficient to fill her son's head pretty thoroughly.

"Battle and murder and sudden death be nothing to what's happened," she began. "And first that misbegotten plague of Egypt, Elijah Newte, dared to lay his claws on Faith, and I shan't enjoy my pipe or my glass till you've struck him dead for it. And then, while she was in his clutches—the very day you sailed it was—who should come along but a stranger in the land and rush to my girl's rescue ! But though he meant well, the Devil helped his own and Newte laid the brave fellow flat with a clout under the jaw that would have killed a bullock ! And then my tibby lamb here, who was the cause of all the rumpus, she fetches water and brings Mr. Unknown Man to his senses and leads him down to me. In he comes, as weak as a new-dropped calf, and I pour a drop of the right sort down his neck and set him on his pins again, and then—thunder and sky-larks ! we ask the man his name and find 'tis Robert Pawlet ! And what d'you think of that, my beautiful boy ?"

"I suppose he soon cleared out when he found where he'd got to?" said Nicholas, and his mother answered—

"Devil a bit! He's very wishful to be friends with us all. We didn't talk of no delicate subjects at the time, but just mended his poor chin and did him good and purred to him like a pair of turtles. And he's had a yarn with Faith since that evening, and he says that he don't want to quarrel with anybody, if it can be helped—a very Christian spirit for a gauger and be like to save him a lot of trouble."

"That's not all, mother," said Faith. "Robert Pawlet's as strong and clever as he's gentle and kind. He's seen many a shot fired in anger and carried his life in his hand, and he'll brook no smuggling from friend or foe if he can prevent it. The fear of him has pretty well stopped the fun in Daleham already."

"You know all about him seemingly," said Nick, and Faith answered—

"He's a rare fine chap and I think a lot of him. I never met his like; but because he wants to be friends, 'tis no good thinking you can hoodwink him over free trade, or get him to look the other way either. He's very large-minded and very clear-headed. I like the way he talks, because I can understand his point of view. He says if his own brother took to smuggling, it wouldn't lessen his affection for him—as a brother—but all the same, he wouldn't sleep or rest or take bit or sup, till he'd laid him by the heels as a smuggler."

"He wants to be your friend, same as he is ours," said Mrs. Tresilion, "and he thinks—the dear, brave honey bee—that 'twill make no difference to the friendship of any of us if he catched you on your way home from France with a few kegs and cases. And if you ask me, 'tis a very fine thing to have such a high-minded and valiant creature for a friend; and if, when the time comes, I can't get him to understand that friendship is what friendship does, then I'm an old, worn-out, rotten-ribbed hulk, without enough intellects to fill a thimble. But let things go as they're going and, so sure as my name's 'bashful Emma,' the man will soon be chained hand and foot and harmless as a smelt."

When Faith had left mother and son together, the old woman explained her prophecy.

" You might wonder what the blazes I meant just now, and I'll tell you. This fine cock-robin's in love with our Faith—heels over head and heart over liver in love with the grey-eyed dear ! "

" So's a good few others," said Nick, " and if I've got to go about walloping the fear of God into everybody who offered for Faith, I shall be busier than I want to be."

" But that's not all, my bonny ninepin ; that's not all. It don't matter the tail of a Manx cat who wants Faith ; but it do matter a tarnation lot who she wants herself. For that man she will have ! The time has come and the blow has fallen. If I've got eyes in my head, and not a couple of winter sloan dropped off a blackthorn bush, then the girl's gone on gauger ! Mark me, as sure as I drink hollands and smoke birdseye to the glory of God, the thing will fall out and you'll have the cutest exciseman in Devon for your own lawful brother-in-law ! "

" Mercy me ! " cried Nicholas. " Was ever heard the like ! And what will happen then, mother ? "

" That's for us to look to—you and me. I'm telling secrets, pitchforked out of an innocent girl's heart by my cunning old wits. She can hide herself from most people, but she can't hide herself from me."

" And what'll Master Paul say ? "

" He'll breathe fire and fury against the Customs man. But that's all beside the question. He knows that Faith's free. And don't say a word, for I'm telling you things before they happen. Don't whisper a syllable of this when you see Robert Pawlet. A very tidy, clean-spun chap, well set up, cheerful and pleasant to the eye. And so civil to me, of course, as a lamb to a wolf. I see through it, though, to do the puppy-dog justice, I'm not quite sure if he knows himself what's happened to him ; but Faith's a girl and she knows. So there it is, and if the son of John Tresilion—gone to glory—don't get some good out of what's going to happen, then I'll disown the silly kangaroo and find a son elsewhere ! "

" You run on so," said the youth. " I was going to tell you that I'm fairly full up with fishing. 'Tis no job for a brave man. I want to be doing father's work and looking up his friends over the water. They'll forget *The Grey Bird* if she don't show up afore long. And all the crew feels the same for that matter."

" You couldn't say nothing to please me better," answered his parent. " It would be a very cruel stroke of fortune to find my firstborn was no better than all the other tame lobster-catchers and long-shore loafers. In fact I'd not stand it from you. I'd rather you went along with my nephew, Peter Merle, and joined a King's ship. 'Tis time you was following in my dead saint's shoes, and keeping up the fine business he made, and winning the great fame that rare man won on both sides of the water. You must go about your proper business for all our sakes, and if gauger's muzzled and tied hand and foot for evermore by uniting himself to our noble family, why, then so much the better for my fine boy. He's a very sensible young fellow and if I can't make him listen to reason after the murderer's out and they are tokened, then you may call me a piebald, pink sea louse."

" If they're courting, it might be a very good time for us to be busy," said Nicholas. " The chaps are all hungry for a bit of useful work and fishing——"

Faith re-entered and for the time no more was said ; but she resumed upon the same subject and, while not in the least interested in Robert Pawlet's business, showed herself very interested in Robert himself. Indeed her remarks following on those of her mother seemed very strongly to indicate that the old woman was right.

Faith's nature was not ingenuous, but it could be fiery and she knew how to feel. Now she found herself in love for the first time in her life, and her spirit, secret though it might usually be, was not able silently to stand the strain of so tremendous an experience. Moreover, she was with those who loved her best in the world and felt no special need for caution. She spoke of Robert Pawlet, and showed by not a few frank touches how long and how deeply she had thought upon him.

Mrs. Tresilion blew a cloud and confirmed her daughter's criticisms ; while Nicholas, listening very patiently, soothed himself with the smell of mutton-chops which were cooking for his supper.

He ate presently and then declared himself all eagerness to see the exciseman.

" It stands to reason in my business that I'd sooner have such a chap a friend than not," he said, " but I'm not going to turn pious because my sister's gone on a gauger, so don't think it."

She laughed at that, and told him not to talk nonsense.

Nicholas went down to the boat presently and there met Hooker and Copleston. He heard further talk of the exciseman, and, finishing the night at *The Sailors' Joy*, listened to Henry Sidebottom on the same subject.

" As civil-spoken and sensible a young man as we've had in Daleham for a month of Sundays," said the publican. " He's a very reasonable person, with an old head on young shoulders ; and he's got right on his side without a doubt ; so, as I told him, I hope his work will be easy. And to you, Nicholas, I also say that I hope his work will be easy, and that you'll not help to make it difficult. The days are passed for lawlessness in Daleham."

" I've got no quarrel with him yet," answered Tresilion. " I haven't set eye on the man so far ; but if all I hear be true, I'm like to see plenty of him before long—not in the way of business, but pleasure. He's as thick as thieves with my mother and sister. They won't hear a word against him. I'm wondering what my father would have said."

He told Mr. Sidebottom of the trip " round land " and praised Gilbert Oxenham very heartily.

" A better messmate I never want to sail with," he declared. " Of course he's cleverer than all us chaps put together ; but that easy and pleasant with it you'd think we were all the friends he wanted. And he would take his watches and do his heavy work with the rest, and very well he done it. I'd trust him with a full boat and the trickiest business. 'Tis his great wish to come

—somewhere else some fine day; and if he wills it, he'll come. You can't say 'nay' to the man—at least I can't."

Later in the evening Nicholas made the same remark to his mother and she considered it.

"He might be a tower of strength in a mess," she said. "We all know there's one law for the rich and another for the poor, and when things went wrong, as they will with the cleverest, so like as not the Justices would wink at it if an Oxenham got into trouble."

"He had a fine forebear who was a pirate," explained Nicholas, "and smuggling's the next best thing—so he says. He's set on it."

"To France you go next week," decreed his mother, "if 'tis only for my sake. My particular tap be running low, and it shan't be said of you—more than it could be said of your dead father—gold wings and a golden crown he's gotten now—that you kept your poor old bed-lier of a mother short of her little comforts."

"So be it," he said; "and proper glad will be every man in the boat."

Two days later Mr. Pawlet came to sup with the Tresilions, and Nicholas met the man destined to figure henceforth so strangely in his own life. Even a bachelor, as yet untouched by love, was able to see that this unemotional and virile officer had been hard hit. His real attitude to Faith could not be concealed, albeit he strove hard to mask the truth and display no more than a civil attention. It was easy to note also, by his conduct to Mother Tresilion, that he desired to ingratiate himself with her.

"He's making hay while the sun shines," she whispered to Nicholas, "and that's what you'd better do. He won't have any eyes for any other matter but Faith till the deed's done and he's got her."

Indeed, despite his care, Robert Pawlet revealed the state of his feelings at every turn. He did not shine, for he was too preoccupied, and coming from an order of society that is not trained to hide its emotions from the cradle, he possessed no practice in the art. His efforts to exercise it were indeed crude. He avoided

mention of his business, but strove to engage Nicholas in conversation on the subject of fishing. Then he discussed the local geography, but was careful to keep off all matters that might lead to private knowledge in Tresilion's mind. He spoke of the lighthouse and the ridge of rocks on which it stood. In the course of his business he had visited them. He praised Jacob Merle, but feared that Mrs. Tresilion's brother might be growing too old for such an important duty as the light involved. But this the sister of Jacob would not grant.

"The Merles be as long-lived as Brazilian parrots," she said. "Proper old Methuselahs I can tell you, and tough as moor-stone. Nothing kills 'em. Five score years they go to and think nought of it. Here be I, like a felled tree, and no liver left, and my innards a disgrace to the doctors for twenty year, yet I go gaily on, and owing to my character and the brains in my head and my great power of language, I count for twice as much as a lot of other everyday females that have the use of their legs. But legs be nought against wits and often take a woman into mischief for that matter. Any fool can trot about, but it takes a terrible wise creature to do what I do, though she's laid aside and never seen in the haunts of the living."

Mr. Pawlet endorsed these sentiments.

"I hear about your great cleverness, ma'am, from many quarters. There's no doubt that you are the first wonder of Daleham," he said, "and long may you continue so to be."

"I shall," she assured him. "My brother has a fancy that him and me will go together; but I shall outlive the old man by years no doubt. He's a very good pattern of grey-beard; but he hasn't got my devil in him. You being what you are, Robert Pawlet, a limb of the law, I can't speak to you so open as I might to another. Because with a Customs officer, or a parson, the free spirit droops. There's a stuffy air about 'em in my opinion, and when Doctor Baldwin be coming, I go without drink for hours, so as to get into a low-spirited and religious frame of mind. And with you, being as you are a gauger and drawing your pay

from the beastly Government, I can't tell you a great many interesting things, because they might hurt your feelings. But if, some day, you give up that walk of life and go to sea, like my son Nicholas, or join the Navy, like my nephew Peter of the *Leviathan* to Plymouth—then, in that larger sphere, I might blossom out and tell you some very fine tales. But I'm too nice to name such things just yet. 'Twould be too much like talking of sage and onions to a goose."

Mr. Pawlet quite appreciated this consideration for his calling.

"I'm sure there's plenty of interesting things we can talk about without touching delicate subjects," he said. "You all know what I'm here for, and I hope you'll know I'll do my duty, as becomes an honest man; and I hope to God that duty won't turn any new friend into an enemy, for there's no harder fate than to find right and honour coming between you and those you care about. It have happened to me once, and I hope it may never fall out again."

"Was it a girl?" asked Mrs. Tresilion. "Excuse my freedom, but a pretty dicky-bird like you haven't come to your time of life without winking at the maidens now and again; I'll warrant that."

"Never," he said very earnestly. "I hope you'll believe me when I say that I've never thought upon such a thing and never had no use for 'em at all. My own mother was at me to the last minute before she died, to take a wife; for she believed that no young man was complete without one; but I laughed at her and thought then—silly sheep that I was—that a man in my business was better free."

"So he is," declared Nicholas. "Excisemen and smugglers, and such like bold heroes, didn't ought to wed. 'Tis only to make trouble when they come to grief."

"What do you know about it, you curly-headed Barbary ape?" asked his mother. "Of course all bold heroes ought to have wives and get brats to carry on the breed. But as for dangers, they be things of the past, for smuggling is an old wife's tale nowadays. There's

no smugglers left—my saint was the last. The craft has vanished out of the land and our young fellows take help-mates with a light heart and no fear of dying out of their beds. But the coming generation will all be rabbits—not men. So you never loved a fine girl, Robert? I call you 'Robert' because you please me, and if I was in my twenties again, I'd so soon have kept company with you as another."

"I came to Daleham heart-whole, ma'am," he assured her.

"And will doubtless remain so. The Daleham girls are a poor lot—pinnikin grey tabbies—not worth the thought of a man like you."

"Not all," he said.

"I know but one who's different, and that's that fine thing here," said Faith's mother, pointing a ringed finger at her daughter. "I was bigger in the bust and a good few inches taller than her when I was a girl; and I had an arm on me like a butcher and was noted for my very fine and free choice of language from my youth up. And I could sit on my hair—such a mane it was—and in a boat I was always as good as a man and a boy. And many such like virtues and gifts I had. But there's nobody to praise me now my dead saint's gone to his harp and throne; because these here spawn—my boy and my girl—of course they never knew me in all the glory of my prime. Why, I knocked a six-foot man heels over head into the Bay of Biscay once, for cheeking me in my old father's boat, and then I flung a rope's end to the lashevicious devil and dragged him aboard again!"

"I could listen to you all night," said Pawlet, "for you're a great marvel in my opinion."

"And so's my girl. She's a very good second to me, and owing to being friends with a fine French maiden up the hill, she sees finer company than ever I saw. At this moment there's a man of lands and means and born a gentleman who's crying out to wed that girl there. And she can't deny it. We should have the church bells ringing in a fortnight and her a brave bride if she liked. Then no doubt her old mother wouldn't be forgot, and

we should all be like sheep in clover to our dying day."

Mr. Pawlet displayed concern.

"It may happen yet," said Emma. "For I'd never stand between a daughter and her heart's delight. Many have wed out of their station and no harm come of it. And so far as that goes, this here slip, though I say it to her dinky face, be worthy of the best and highest in the land. She'd do honour to a prince of the blood or the Emperor of all the Roossians. And nothing would surprise me."

The evening came to an end and Pawlet presently retired in some uneasiness. His life centred on Faith Tresilion now, and the thought that a rich and powerful man desired her did not astonish him; but it served greatly to cast him down.

Mrs. Tresilion had, however, gained her object, and when Faith protested upon the exciseman's departure, her mother bade her shut her mouth.

"You mind your own business, you grey-eyed flibberty-gibbit," she said, "and you know very well what that business is. The man's all right and, like a good many others in the same fix, he wants a helping hand and a reminder that he ain't the only male thing on the prowl after you. It's going to be; he'll offer afore you can look round; and if it don't spell a bit of useful help to Nicholas and *The Grey Bird*, then he's not his father's son. To have a Customs officer in the family ain't a thing our race might have expected; but that's what's going to happen to us; and when it do happen, then trust me to give that Robin boy all the law and the prophets about his duty."

"Tis idle to talk like that, mother," said Faith. "I'm not so vain as to think he really cares for me, but if he does and I find that I can take him, you may be terrible sure of one thing: he'll never come round to your way of thinking."

The old woman snapped her fingers.

"Shall it be said I couldn't make a green youth do my bidding and think my thoughts, and see with my eyes?" she asked. "And if the hawk-headed scorpion didn't do

as I bade him, then I'd break your neck and tear you into ten thousand pieces afore he should have you!"

"Mother's right," declared Nicholas. "We must get him our side once for all. 'Tis very certain that the man can't be your lover and my enemy. I reckon you're too good a sister to me to be content with such a sweetheart as that."

CHAPTER XIV

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

PUNCTUALLY Warner Baldwin waited the tilt cart on the day of his visit to Plymouth and watched it creep out of the dull light of dawn on a still and misty morning. There was no other passenger, and Newte invited the traveller to go inside and escape the chill air and damp atmosphere.

"There's plenty of room within, your honour," he said, "if you don't mind travelling with a box or two and a baby's coffin. Us'll get rid of that at Natter village on the way."

But the lieutenant declined Mr. Newte's invitation and preferred to sit beside him where he drove.

"I'd sooner talk," he said. "You do not drive as though you were well used to the business."

"I'm not," confessed the other, "and if you will but give me a hint or two, gallant sir, I'll thank you. I'm a sailor, and what I don't know about sea craft ain't worth knowing ; but I've seldom steered a land craft till now."

The other chatted amicably and probed a little to learn what manner of man Newte might be. There were no difficulties, for Newte proved talkative and soon supplied the necessary information.

"I left the sea through no fault of my own, and I'd go back to-morrow if work offered. But it have got to be man's work, not child's. I don't know what you feel about free trading, master, and if I'm on dangerous ground you can tell me so."

"I'm no enemy to the smugglers," declared Warner. "Far from it. 'Tis man's work, as you say, and if you are so capable a hand in a boat as you declare, then I

wonder to find you ashore. Surely there is plenty for you to do in Daleham?"

"There was, but not now. We've all gone weak at the knees afore the new exciseman, and Nicholas Tresilion isn't half the man his father was. In truth he's a poor creature under his skin. I worked for John Tresilion and was his right hand for a good few years. Then, when he died, things soon went wrong. I've been cruelly ill-used. But 'tis dangerous ground and I'd better not trouble you with my affairs."

Warner Baldwin drew a little silver flask from his pocket and took a nip of spirits. Then he handed it to the other.

"You needn't fear me," he said. "I'm like yourself perhaps, with my hand against a rascal, who has wronged me. Indeed he has to answer for it anon with a sword or pistol."

"You upper people can settle your differences that way," answered Newte. "But we cannot. However, I've yet to meet the man who can stand afore me for three rounds. And 'tis your own cousin who has wronged me, though he don't know it."

"Paul Deschamps?"

"That's the young gentleman. I don't bear him no malice for it, for, as I tell you, he don't know what he's done. But I was so good as tokened to Tresilion's sister. I've courted her humbly and faithfully for years and years. The thing was done, you might say, and everybody thought we was to be man and wife. Then he came along, like the night-hawk he is, and of course he bamboozled her until I looked nothing in her eyes. And then she threw me over and I hadn't the heart to stop with the family no more."

"He's a rogue, though my own cousin," declared Baldwin. "He's a Frenchman to begin with, and what honest man would trust a Frenchman? He has used you shamefully, it seems; but the poor are still under the heel of the rich, and doubtless you dare not for your life strike back. But a time is coming when the poor will be cowards no more. And then——"

"You needn't think nothing like that, gallant sir,"

said Elijah. "I'm notafeared of rich, or poor, and if I thought this man had done any hookem snivey to sloke Faith Tresilion away from me, I'd revenge myself. But 'twas all fair and lawful—so I was given to understand."

"More fool you to believe it. Nothing is fair and lawful that that man does. A shifty knave and a traitor, not only to those of his own blood, but to his adopted country. No punishment can be too bad for him, and I hope from my heart that when presently he stands before my sword or pistol—he has choice of weapons—I shall reach his vitals and rid the world of a young villain before he has time to do more mischief in it."

Elijah Newte was much impressed by this fierce speech. In truth he bore Deschamps no particular ill will, well knowing in reality that it was not his influence that had come between him and Faith Tresilion, but his soul was bitter and his hand ready to strike the world. He now perceived that more than a general grievance inspired the other, and finding Warner hate his cousin very heartily, pretended to develop a similar hatred, that he might win the lieutenant's friendship.

There fell a silence and break in their conversation, for at a little hamlet the cart drew up and a small coffin was handed to a sorrowing father. Newte had been directed not to leave the little box until he received the money for it, and there was some delay. Then the cart trotted on for Plymouth through a drizzle of cold, grey vapour blown up by south winds from the sea.

Having laid his train the soldier now prepared to fire it. His conversation ranged over various subjects, then returned by gradual stages to Deschamps. He spoke of his own patriotism and gave a version of his services under arms which differed very radically from the facts. He contrasted Paul's devices and nocturnal methods with his own honourable achievements, and gave it as his honest opinion that the young Frenchman was engaged in a disreputable and infamous intrigue with the enemies of England.

"Be sure that I would not hint at such a serious crime

without the gravest reasons," he declared. " And I should certainly not mention the matter to you, who are a stranger, did I not put confidence in you. I entertain a high opinion of your courage and good sense, therefore I confess to you that I believe my cousin is using his position in this country against us. He does not hesitate to declare himself an out-and-out follower of Napoleon. Probably he is too young and weak to be of much real service, but even an infant adder is poisonous, and what he could do to help the evil cause, he would. I have very little doubt in my own mind that he is in some sort of secret correspondence with his friends in France ; but, of course, I have no means of proving that suspicion. If it were in my power to do so, I would gladly reward any informant, for such a discovery might cut short his tricks and at the same time enable me to do my country a service."

He spoke with apparent good faith and continued to utter the noblest sentiments ; but Newte did not rise to the bait at once. He was suspicious and, since a knave is usually a good judge of another, felt the man addressing him was playing a doubtful part. His cupidity, however, got the better of any fears, and presently, after weighing the matter in silence, he spoke. He too pretended, and a spectator had been presented with the humorous spectacle of two rascals each endeavouring in vain to impress the other with the honesty of his purpose.

" What you say be very terrible to hear," declared Elijah, " and as a good Englishman, though only a humble sailor man, I burn to think we've got a foreign foe in our midst at Daleham. But I can't hold my peace in honour after what you tell me, because, by a terrible coorious chance, your words may throw a bit of light on something I've got to do this very day. God forgive me if I judge the young man wrong, and I'm sure I hope he'll prove innocent as the light, and I won't allow my ill-treatment at his hands to influence me in such a fearful thing. 'Tis true that he stole my girl away and cruelly wronged me by so doing ; but I'll put that out of my mind."

"What's all this rigmarole?" interrupted the other.
"I be coming to it. I haven't your fine choice of words. 'Tis just this. You guess the young man has got secrets in France; and I know he has."

"You know he has!"

The lieutenant exhibited profound astonishment, started, and nearly fell out of the tilt cart.

"I know it, as sure as I know I've got a packet from him in my pocket. Hold the reins a minute, master, if you doubt. Then you'll soon see that what I tell is true."

Warner took the reins and spoke.

"You fill me with dismay. Is it possible that——?"

"Egg works for him, and I work for Egg. The old man does this job himself most times; but he can't leave home for the moment along of his wife's death; and so it falls to me. There's no address on the parcel—too cunning for that. But I've got to take it down to the Barbican, to a French boat that should be lying there waiting for me; and she'll have a letter for Paul Deschamps, which I shall bring back with me."

Warner Baldwin continued to show the most active amazement combined with sorrow.

"This is a bitter stroke," he said. "And I am cut to the heart to find my fears so swiftly verified. That any member of our loyal house—it is a harsh blow to an honourable clan. I am overwhelmed. I confess it is very difficult to know my duty before this dreadful revelation."

But Newte felt little concern with the sentimental aspect of the discovery. He wondered whether there might be money in it and expected that there might.

"'Tis a terrible difficult question as you say," he answered, "for it have so many different sides. Give me the parcel, master, please. 'Tis in my care and I must do my duty to them that employ me."

"It is a question of our duty to England," declared the other. "No private duty must come between us and that."

"Begging your pardon, you must speak for yourself there," answered the fisherman. "No doubt, as a

gallant soldier and a man that will rise to greatness some day, you feel so ; but I'm only a poor sailor with no money and no friends. I can't afford to run any risks of losing my employment for the good of England. I'd go, mind you, and lay down my life for my country if I thought it my duty ; but I don't see it quite like that. At best 'tis only a dreadful suspicion and you may be wrong. The letter may be innocent. We must hope it is."

But Baldwin did not take this in bad part. It was all part of the game and he expected Newte to speak so.

"I say nothing to that, Elijah Newte. Indeed you cannot be asked to violate your trust at the invitation of a stranger. Moreover, your hope, that my unfortunate cousin may after all be innocent, does credit to your humanity. I would that I could share that hope and dismiss the subject from my mind ; but Providence appears to have chosen me for her tool in this startling business, and however much I might wish to shirk this grim necessity, as a soldier and a gentleman it is no longer possible for me to do so. I must act and I intend to act ; but I have no wish to put any responsibility upon you. Two courses are open to me—either to arrange privily with you and pay you a reasonable sum for assisting me in what I believe to be my duty ; or else to take the law into my own hands when we reach Plymouth, have this vehicle arrested and also arrest the crew of the Frenchman for whom this letter is intended. Personally, for the good of the nation, I would far rather keep the business a profound secret for the present and act in concert with you, as a man to be depended upon ; but if you feel that you cannot share my responsibility, even at the price of ten guineas, then I will fall in with your decision and fling the matter into the hands of the military. In that case you'll have to spend the night at Plymouth Citadel, and probably not be your own man again for many a day ; but my only wish is to oblige you in the matter and put you under no detention if it can be avoided."

Elijah made little further demur.

"Money's money to a poor man ; but I wouldn't put the money first—be sure of that. If you think the country's better served by secrecy, then secret I'll be. I'm in your hands henceforth."

He took the packet from his pocket again.

"'Tis fastened with red wax but no seal thereon," he said, "it would be an easy matter to break it open and seal it again without any being the wiser, for there's neither mark nor written word upon it. If 'tis innocent, then none's the loser."

"My own idea," declared the other. "We will go to the *Rose and Crown*, a little hostelry known to me at Plymouth, and there open the parcel. And before doing so, we will purchase wax and string, that we may seal it up again exactly as it was before."

The plan thus laid was carried out ; Warner engaged a private room, and while Newte put up his horse in the stable, Paul's cousin opened the parcel. Within two rolls of thick paper upon which nothing was written, appeared a communication ; but it was brief and concerned matters of which Lieutenant Baldwin had no knowledge. He understood French, however, and was able to gather that Paul's missive had been written in reply to another.

It was a passionate note protesting with all the writer's power against certain directions.

"*It is useless to send me these particulars, or command me to meet your party in London,*" he wrote ; "*and I blush to think that you seek to put such work upon me. I am a soldier, not a spy, and I will not consent to obey you, for it is not the work that I was born to do. Remember my father and how he fell for Bonaparte. I will do the like and shed my last drop of blood for him ; but I will not assist you in the direction you demand, and if my refusal incurs your anger, I can only regret it. I am in bitter grief that you can rate me so low as to seek to put this jackal work upon a gentleman. It may be necessary to estimate the accessible forces in England and their state of preparation : but to plot the life of Wellington, as you darkly hint, is damnable, and God helping me, I would rather die than have any hand in such knavery. I repeat*

that it has shaken me to the heart to think that you can associate me with such an enterprise. For what is a man's life without honour?"

In this strain the youth wrote, and having read his impassioned refusal to do what unknown papers demanded, Baldwin presently spoke to his new friend.

" My cousin is vague and does not commit himself ; but it is clear that he is aware of certain deep and deadly enterprises that are being matured in France against this country. It may be best to keep this document for the present. It will also be well, if possible, to learn what his communication from France contains before we suffer him to receive it."

" If there's a plot hatching against England, there ought to be mighty big money to it," said Elijah.

" Have no fear on that score. There is plenty of time. We are mercifully permitted to make this terrific discovery ; but we must not spoil all by striking too soon. Now to get the letters that await my cousin and learn what will be best to do with them. Then we can return here for our meal."

Down High Street to the quays went this well assorted pair. Now a mere backwater of the life of the great seaport, High Street a hundred years ago was the main and central artery of Plymouth and still enjoyed the importance and significance won in Tudor times.¹ Here, in what are now designated slums, lived the merchant princes and those of light and leading of their day. . . . Generations of fair women and brave men lived and loved in what of old were mansions ; and though High Street had already abated of its Elizabethan and Stuart glories, yet it was an important thoroughfare, and not the alley of to-day. The shop-keeping citizens apparently knew how to charge of old, for we find in a Carolian play of Davenant's " Newes from Plymouth " that—" If you walk but three turnes

In the High Street, they will ask you for mony
For wearin out the Pebbles" ;
and this defect of greediness still certainly belonged

¹ W. H. K. Wright, the famous West Country historian and antiquary.

to the tradesfolk when Baldwin and Newte came among their picturesque, overhanging buildings with their shops beneath. Indeed Newte grumbled.

"'Tis a very rogue's roost of Jews," he said. "And they would charge you for the air you breathed if they dared to do it. However money have got to be spent."

South Gate was still standing at the time of this narration and hither they came, to a Barbican that pursued then as now the great business of fishing. Crowds moved this way and that, and along the quays, above the oily water of the harbour, were spread tons of fish fresh from the sea. The din of bells was in the air, with shouting of men, rattling of wheels on shore and the noise of blocks in the boats.

They called at a little inn, *The Black Prince*, whose name commemorated Richard's departure from the Barbican to the Crusades; then, hearing that the Frenchman had arrived, they passed to another spot of profound historical interest, where to-day on Barbican pier there stands a stone with this simple inscription: "*Mayflower 1620.*"

And here a little three-masted Havre trawler lay, fast fore and aft to wooden bollards on the quay. The tide was low and her deck extended fifteen feet beneath the pier head above; but a rope ladder hung from the quay-side and Newte swung down. At the sound of heavy feet on the deck a Frenchman popped his head up the hatch, and the visitor, very willing to air his command of the language, explained that he had come from Daleham and was the messenger of Paul Deschamps. The black-beard nodded and beckoned Elijah below. He was absent for half an hour, then reappeared and returned to Baldwin, who had grown weary of waiting. At the same moment, the trawler's crew of four men and a boy cast off, drew up their dinghy and slipped away to sea.

But Newte had not returned empty-handed, and now, when once more the twain were in a room at the *Rose and Crown* before their meal, Baldwin examined another packet which the other brought with him.

"I asked them for particulars," said he, "but they were simple French fishermen and knew nothing. They are well paid for playing postman and combine the work with their own business. They asked for a letter and I told them there was none this voyage."

But the soldier was occupied with the packet and he found that it would be impossible to open it and seal it again in a manner to occasion no suspicion. He decided nevertheless to open it and conceal the contents from his cousin.

Baldwin broke open the packet when their meal was done; but the contents proved to be largely in cipher and he was balked. A letter, however, covered the secret writings and indicated that they were of extreme importance. The communication was, moreover, couched in hortatory terms and blamed Deschamps strongly for some previous communication. "*Your purpose is to serve your Emperor,*" ran the letter, "*and it is not for you to choose in what capacity you shall do so. Your opportunities are unique. Therefore hasten to London as soon as you receive these data and directions, and put yourself in touch with our friends there. I know you and have seen you in the field. Your work is waiting your hand, and should you fall, remember that your name is glorious for ever.—Jean de Dieu.*"

"It is from Soult!" cried Baldwin. "The Marshal is related to Paul Deschamps. He espoused the Bourbon cause when Napoleon abdicated, but in reality he is doubtless still on his old master's side. We have come into possession of a terrific secret!"

The other was silenced by the immensity of the discovery. At last, however, he found his tongue.

"Then Boney's going to escape!" he said.

"And there are Frenchmen in London who are plotting the life of Wellington. Let us make no mistake, for a false step will ruin all."

He considered a dozen courses, but personal hatred, not public duty, inspired them. Newte could only sit and stare stupidly at the papers.

"It looks as if they wanted him to take on a job he don't like, master. He's kicked at it afore, and now he

gets this sharp answer. No doubt he'll have to do as he's bid and go to London Town as quickly as he's able."

The other nodded.

"And that's just what I would not have him do," he replied. "We'll treat these papers like his own and impound them for the present. But no suspicion must be aroused. This is what happens to a rascal when he sets honest men to do his work for him. We'll pit craft against craft, Elijah Newte. It stands thus. I'll keep these papers a secret for a few days, and you must report that the Frenchman was not in harbour."

"Nay, that won't do neither. For then he'll want his own letter back," said Newte.

"I have already planned it so. His own letter he shall have again, exactly as he sent it. You return it to Gaffer Egg and say that the French boat had not been seen or heard of, that you waited till nightfall, but still there came no news of her. This will serve our turn for the present. Meanwhile I shall be busy."

The other had no further suggestion to make.

"So long as I get a bit of good money out of it, I care nothing," he confessed. "Such adventures don't fall to the lot of a poor man twice in his life, and I beg you'll see all's fair and straight, master."

"Have no fear for that," answered Warner. Then he busied himself with Paul's parcel, wrapped it up again with the utmost care and sealed it with red wax. No signet but a flat surface only had been used for the original impressions, and these were easily imitated.

They prepared to start upon the return journey, and Newte, after he had carried out Mr. Egg's commissions, met an acquaintance at the door of the inn. He was talking with him when Baldwin, who had stopped to pay the reckoning, appeared. A strapping young man-of-war's man had engaged in conversation with Elijah.

"Best you come into the Navy then," said the stranger. "If you've left my cousin, Nicholas, you join the *Leviathan*. You're the sort of man we're looking for. Better aboard one of His Majesty's ships than

driving a go-cart. I'm ashamed to see a man of your inches at such work."

Newte laughed.

"Beggars can't be choosers," he said. "And a ship of war's no fun if there ain't no fighting in the wind."

The sailor foretold more fighting ere long. Then he bade Elijah remember him to friends at Daleham.

"You tell my aunt, Emma Tresilion, that I'll come along some fine day and drink a bottle with her; and give Faith a kiss from me," he said, little guessing how Mr. Newte had lately been kissing that fair maiden on his own account.

Newte explained, when the sailor was gone and his tilt cart had started homewards.

"'Tis Peter Merle, related to old Jacob Merle at the lighthouse and to the Tresilions. He's a boatswain on His Majesty's ship of the line, *Leviathan*, and when he heard tell that I'd left *The Grey Bird*, he was at me to go in the Navy."

"You've got bigger work than that ahead of you," foretold Warner.

They fell to talking about their own affairs and forgot the sailor. Neither dreamed under what extraordinary circumstances he would next fall in with Nicholas Tresilion's cousin.

CHAPTER XV

" YES ! "

BENEATH Daleham head the limestone cliffs fell by many a jagged peak and pinnacle to the green depths of the sea. Now light from the low noonday sun burned over land and water. It flashed upon the gentle ripples that lapped against the precipices ; it illuminated the limestone until every percolation of iron and every growing thing upon its weathered planes glowed hotly. Great purple shadows fell here and there to cool the sunlit splendour ; grey gulls flew among the pearly cliffs and set them echoing ; cast like embroidery over the rock faces and in every cleft and cranny, where such fair things could find foothold, the thrift and samphire, the sea-lavender and yellow stone-crop made ready to paint the cliffs with pink, purple and yellow when May should come ; while below within reach of the salt spray, when storm winds brought the great billows against the land, dwelt the rare sea spleenwort in dim caverns only to be reached from the sea.

To the horizon the Channel spread in a dim glory of grey and silver where sunshine mantled the waves, and upon this radiant expanse of waters there sailed two little fleets. Far beneath the cliffs a galaxy of gulls starred the deep ; while ten miles to seaward, yet well above the horizon seen thus from the crown of the cliffs, full five and forty fishing craft sailed on their trawls. At this range their sails were grey ; but a nearer ketch or two on her homeward journey revealed the bright russet or ochre of her canvas and made a splash of colour against the blue.

Faith had shown Robert Pawlet the fortifications, with their hidden chambers and store-rooms destined

never to be completed, and he had said that such subterranean regions would want watching.

"They might be built for the smugglers," he declared, "and doubtless a party here and there knows quite as much about 'em as you do."

"Smuggling's only a word now," she answered. "There'll be no more of that since you've come."

But he doubted. He had heard much of late and guessed his place would be no sinecure. Love held him in bondage now, for the germ works terrible havoc when it bursts upon a heart that has never been inoculated ; and for him, as for the girl, the passion ran like fire. They thrilled to each other, and now, as they sat nigh the edge of the cliffs, where rabbits had tunnelled amid the dwarf furze and the white rock-rose would presently scatter its tender beauties, he spoke.

"Faith—Faith darling ! Mayhap I'm cutting my throat to dare to say it ; but I must out or choke. I've got to make a clean breast of it. I've known you three weeks, but time's nought ; it seems a thousand years to me—a blessed time, but cruel unquiet and punishing to a humble man. I don't know how I dare—but I've got to dare. Oh, Faith Tresilion, I love you something fearful—'tis a very shattering thing when it's let loose like this. It drives me mad—the sound of your voice sends the blood up to the roots of my hair as if I was drunk. And—and—"

She interrupted him with her eyes on the sea.

"There's *The Grey Bird* coming in. Nicholas just went out for a night, to please mother and try and trawl once more. Father called her *The Grey Bird* because he was so fond of the grey-bird's singing. And so be I —ban't you ? "

"You put me off," he answered impatiently. "And that's none too civil a thing—at such a solemn moment. I be offering myself and my life and everything that is mine—heart and hope and worship."

She looked up at him and smiled with a world of love in her eyes. But she shook her head.

"You talk, Bob Pawlet, my dear ; but I've heard it so often before. They all say the same—though I grant

you put it finer than the poor mumpheads in yonder boats. Ever since I was wife-old I've heard it."

"They're not all mumpheads. Your brother's no mumphead. But then he's no fisherman," he retorted drily.

At this challenge Faith became alive and alert. She laughed and put her hand on his knee; whereat he heaved a gasp and hoped she would leave it there. The strong, brown hand was gone in a moment and she spoke.

"No fisherman? What is he then? He tells my mother and me that he's a fisherman."

"I value his friendship and hope to keep it."

"There's not a rose without a thorn, Robert," she said, peeping up at him again.

"No thorns where you are, you beautiful treasure! I'd have your way all smooth and suent, with never a care or a sorrow to cloud the sunshine for you. And I'd do what a poor, faithful man might to make it so. As for Nicholas, I can very well understand a fearless, brave, young lion like him may find catching fish a tame calling year in year out; then why don't he put in for the Navy and leave the simpler men to handle his nets and run his boat?"

"Why don't you?"

"We can't all go to sea. I'm working for the nation ashore. But your brother——"

"Mother wouldn't let him. She dared him once when we were at war and he wanted to go."

"As to that, we may be fighting again. There's rumours. Mayhap the press-gang will pay Daleham a visit some day. But leave him, this ain't the moment for him, or any other person on earth, but you. You and me, Faith. It sounds like heavenly music in my ear; but maybe 'tis very different in yours. I'd live for you and I'd die for you, so I would. I'm yours, body and soul, and I want for you to be mine the same way. I'm rising in my business and——"

"'Tis a beast of a business, Robert. I've no quarrel with you, and well you know it. I can't hide what you are to me, and I never tried very hard for that matter.

But to be the wife of a Customs man ! Was ever heard the like in my family ! Free traders all my father's folk were—all but Nicholas of course. But things happen as they will and love's love, and now I know it ; but never before. I love you, love you, love you with every drop o' blood in my veins, you dear, dear Bobby, and if you was a devil from hell I'd love you just the same."

"Gospel truth ? Oh, my own wonderful, darling Faith ! 'My own' I say ! 'Tis almost too much for a man to hear and not bust ! "

"I loved you from the first moment you opened your eyes after Newte knocked you down," she said.

" 'Twas a new feeling, different from anything ever I felt afore. I couldn't get your face out of my thoughts, and I wanted to run after you the minute your back was turned. And I'll work my fingers to the bone for you and show you all my cunning and cleverness. And—and I love to think I'm tokened to you, Bobby. You're a darling creature and the joy of my life ! "

He hugged her and kissed her a hundred times and she returned his caresses with a will. Then she bade him be quiet, for he was reckless and shouting his joy.

"Don't holler so terrible loud, my dear heart," she said, "else Uncle Jacob will hear you at the light-house ! "

To Daleham they returned, and the way was short and life a merry dance of golden dreams. Never before, they told themselves, had man and maid loved as they loved ; never had any couple, so perfectly fashioned by Providence to bring each other perfect joy, come together in the full glory of devotion and passion. They trod on air ; they built castles in the air. The winter day was warm and full of the scent of flowers and the glory of high summer for them ; for them the birds sang and the wind blew gently. Their hearts made a great and precious place of earth for a little while—a land of promise, unclouded and unscarred. They vied with each other in painting the future rosily ; they assured each other that while, for

the rest of men and women, must come the rainy day and the sad sky over it, for them, so blessed and dowered, no evil thing could hurt or harsh thing fret their majestic and sublime understanding. Because such amazing and glorious love was armour of proof, to resist every arrow that the changes and chances of fortune would ever launch against their united lives.

Overflowing with these glad hopes they came to Daleham and met Nicholas on the quay. He heard their news, pretended astonishment, declared genuine pleasure and welcomed Pawlet heartily as a future member of the family.

" I liked you very well as soon as I looked upon you," he said. " I'm glad you've found favour in her eyes, and, what's more, my mother will be glad too."

They were soon in the august Emma's presence, but she herself had an interesting matter to relate and ordered them to listen.

" A very remarkable adventure, and I'm not sure what to make of it," she said. " There's a man been to see me, and of all carnivorous, backhanded, slimey snakes 'twas Elijah Newte ! He knew that I was alone, smoking my pipe and thinking of a better world, so he came and knocked at the door, and I, little dreaming what lop-sided sea-wolf it was, bade him come in. And there he stood—six feet six inches of sin—where Robert Pawlet be standing now. I quivered like a melting jellyfish to see the brute, and asked him how he dared bring his carcase into my sight ; and then he fetched out a little agate brooch set in silver, and said as my poor old friend, Milly Egg, had left it to me under her last will and testament, and that her relict, Abednego, was wishful that I should have it as a keepsake of the poor creature and to show his regard for me and mine. And well he may regard us, for my angel husband put a pretty penny in his way, and no doubt he thinks that Nick will do the same. I'd seen the brooch on my poor Milly's skinny throat a hundred times, and I couldn't but take the gift. Which I did do ; and then I told Elijah to get out of my sight, so as my eyes shouldn't be inflamed by the sight of the hateful traitor.

And with that he asked for forgiveness and whined and whimpered, like the bottle-nosed earwig he is, and vowed by the names of a hatful of holy saints that he'd repented of his sins and would make any atonement in his power. True as I'm on this everlasting bed of pain, if the ring-tailed, rat-faced pelican didn't want to make it up and be friends with us again!"

"What did you say, mother?" asked Faith.

"'Say'? I couldn't say nothing. There be times and seasons when words ain't no more good than a half-sovereign to a black-beetle. I didn't say nothing, but by God's forethought, a bottle of Doctor Budd's linament for my leg bones stood at my elbow, and I picked it up and let it fly at the hypocritical baboon at short range! It took him in the waistcoat, about the third button, and burst there like a bombshell; and the stuff be liquid fire at best, so I hope 'twill eat him to the bone, and turn him into a leper and be the death of him."

Nicholas roared with laughter.

"What did the man do then?" he asked.

"There weren't nothing to do," said Mother Tresilion grimly. "He cussed and spluttered, like a cat in a water-butt; then off he went without the manners to shut the door behind him."

But Nicholas was doubtful of this policy, though he did not tell his mother so. He entertained a very genuine respect for the talents of the disreputable Newte and would not have been sorry to win him back to *The Grey Bird*. The deed was done, however, and his plea for forgiveness effectually dismissed.

"There's only one wonder in my mind," said Emma's son when he had heard this story, "and that is why Elijah wants to make it up."

"Any fool could tell you the reason," answered Mrs. Tresilion. "He's had enough of Bad Egg and wants to come back in the boat. But that he never shall if I'm anybody; and if you think such a thing could happen after the past, you know no more about human nature than a periwinkle in a pool. And please God the wretch will be no good to man or beast when that

linament have got to him and burnt the skin off his bones."

Then it was the old woman's turn to hear great news. She listened to Pawlet and then spoke.

"She might have had a French hero, the pretty dab-chick, but she's decided for an English one, and I'm very glad she has. There's no doubt 'tis the real thing, for I loved her father just like that. We ran together, like tongues of fire, and was wedded afore we'd known each other a fortnight. So you can come and kiss me, you young jackanoddy, and I'm very well content to have two sons to work for my poor bed-ridden carcase; and what sort of a mother you may have had I know not, but I'll be a second mother to you and all my wit and sense be at your service from this day forward."

Mr. Pawlet embraced the ponderous woman and kissed her great red face; then she caressed Faith and declared that the day was joyous.

"And my saint, looking down over his golden neckerchief, will rejoice also," she declared. "And if he was here, Robin—for Robin you'll be to me henceforth—if my John was here, he'd talk to you and enlarge your mind something wonderful and get you to see a good many things that are hidden from your vision at present. But since he's better employed—sailing a heavenly lugger on the glassy sea no doubt—you must listen to me and my son. Life's not all love, Robin, my boy, though no doubt, in your present state of mind, you don't think nothing else much matters. But men must work and follow their appointed calling, and I hope we shall get you to see that there's two sides to every question and one side's only good till you've heard t'other."

"He'll learn and he'll teach—won't you, Robert?" asked Faith. "There's a great deal such a clever chap can teach us, and also a few things we sea-faring folk can teach him."

"Of that I'm sure," declared the exciseman. "Cleverer people never were seen. And I'm very wishful to hear about Nick's fishing."

"You shall," said the young man. "You shall come

aboard *The Grey Bird* when you've a mind to, and I hope you'll always be welcome there. But large-minded you've got to be, Pawlet ; and as one of the family we count on you. Me and mother don't ask you to marry us as well as Faith ; but Tresilions are like bees in a hive, and the good of one's the good of all. You hurt a Tresilion and all the clan will have their stings out, as a man or two has found when my dad was alive."

" And it all comes to this, my fine boy, that you mustn't put no hurt on your new relations for the sake of your brass buttons and three-cornered hat," summed up the widow. " When my daughter is wedded, Robin, there'll be very fine lace on her gown and more on her smicket ; and there'll be a brave drop of sparkling wine flying about, to drink the health of the lovely creature, and yours, too, you fearless young eaglet. And there'll be a drop of proper French claret for the poor old bed-ridden mother, I shouldn't wonder, because they fizzy wines don't suit her liver—what's left of it. And when these things happen, Robin, you must play the man and mind your own business, which won't be to find fault with the bride's clothes, or the wedding feast neither. For the man who could do that would be a rascallion Bashi-Bazouk and no husband for my pink rose. Not Faith, nor hope, nor charity neither, should such a man have ; and my childer will tell the same. Now fetch the bottle, and so all's said."

Mr. Pawlet was uneasy, but love blinded his vision for the moment. He regretted that his future mother-in-law should have touched these delicate matters ; but his mind refused to dwell upon them to-day. He was excited and riotously happy in the joy of knowing his love returned. The future must take care of itself—so he assured his heart ; for that day at least he would live in the present.

He drank with them and talked awhile longer, then left to go about his affairs. For the time his life was all roseate as the setting sunlight on the sea. Given only Faith, he told himself that life was powerless largely to fret him ; and if the Tresilions, as it would appear,

were in truth against those forces for which he stood, then much might be done in the way of honest remonstrance and representation before any quarrel arose to mar their relations. They had said that they might enlarge his point of view, and he was secretly sanguine, that presently he would find it in his power to state his case in a manner to convince Nicholas that honesty was the best policy.

Meantime, behind his back, he was discussed with exceeding friendliness and enthusiasm. Mrs. Tresilion showered her handsomest adjectives upon him and announced that a miracle had been performed and a man provided who was worthy of her daughter; while Faith declared her pride and happiness in this betrothal. Her family's hopes were, however, wrong-headed and mistaken in the extreme, though only Faith perceived it. Nicholas voiced his mother and uttered their erroneous opinion.

"'Tis a fairy story and it must work out as well as it sounds, for a man cannot quarrel with his new relations on a difference of opinion. To muzzle Bob Pawlet! A great contraption sure enough, and never another way but that way. He's a man that money wouldn't tempt, nor fame, nor nothing. Born with the mind of a Customs officer you may say. Yet now he's got to change that mind and be mighty quick about it."

"Been busy already, so poor Milly Egg told me on her last visit."

"Yes, he has. Four of the coastguard he's sacked—useful men who could look the other way if need be; and he's tightened up discipline and started drill and been properly brisk and wide awake."

"I shall have a square talk with the boy come presently," said his mother, "and show the pretty fellow the truth about free trading. Of course he don't understand the way the poor people are robbed and cheated and choused by the Government, and don't see what a fine, heroical thing it is to snap your fingers at the wicked laws and do right in spite of them. But not a doubt he's as wise as he's brave, and when he's

heard me on the subject, he'll soon come round to our way of thinking and give over this nasty work. I've got a tongue in my head, I believe, and if it ain't clever enough to get round a brave, young cock-robin like my future son-in-law, then you'd better cut it out of my mouth and bait fish-hooks with it."

Faith was not so sanguine.

"He's a grand chap, but he'll take you all your time to shake him. He don't think his business is a beastly business, though I told him it was at the very minute he was offering marriage to me. He's proud of what he's done and full of what he's going to do."

"You leave him to me," said Emma Tresilion, "you've got your work cut out in another quarter."

"I know that," she admitted. "And the sooner the better. I'll see Paul Deschamps to-night. He'll rage above a bit I'm fearing; but he's no right to rage, for I've never loved the young gentleman and never pretended to."

"Right or not right, he will fret as only a Frenchman can when he's crossed," said Nicholas. "If you be going to see him by the river to-night, best you let me or Robert Pawlet go along with you. Belike he'll fling you in the water or cut your throat."

But she scorned his alarm.

"I'm very well able to take care of myself," she said, "and be it as it will, he's a gentleman. I'm not afraid of him."

"That's right," declared her mother. "No daughter of mine will ever go in fear of a man I reckon. I'd have tied a brick round your neck and drowned you like a kitling when you was born, if I'd thought you'd ever knuckle under to one of they forked radishes we call the lords of creation. Drat the creatures—creation indeed! Creation be in our hands—not theirs. You go to him and tell him the truth, and if he's got anything to say about it, send the frog-eating, fire-eating young French pippin to me."

CHAPTER XVI

LOVE TURNED TO POISON

IT happened, unfortunately, that when Paul met Faith he was full of his own tribulations.

"I cannot stand much more," he said, just as the blow of his young life was about to fall. But she did not blurt out her news. Instead she sympathized and assured him, truly enough, that anything in her power she would willingly do to contribute to his happiness.

"'Tis a cruel thing that a young man like you should suffer so much," she declared, "and you know if I could, I'd gladly pay you back a bit for all you've done for me. You've made me twice as clever a girl as I was, and I'd dearly love to use the cleverness for you, if a way offered."

"You can do but one thing, and you know what it is," he answered. "Now the clouds are crowding thicker and thicker upon me and soon there will be no light left in them and impenetrable night swallow me up."

"What has happened?" she asked.

"I have unknown enemies. I am spied upon. The packet that I sent to Plymouth by Egg was returned to me by him. The boat was not in—so he says, and he brought it back. But my letter has been opened. I feel positive of that. There is a lie here, and there may be more than one. To-morrow, or the next day, I myself go to Plymouth to inquire after the boat from France. I was a fool ever to trust Egg, but I had so much to do and believed him trustworthy."

"You were a greater fool to trust somebody else,"

answered Faith, "but doubtless you know nothing about him. Egg did not go to Plymouth last week. He sent his man, Elijah Newte, and if your papers were tampered with, then it is Newte who is responsible."

"What has he got to do with Egg?" asked Paul, and she explained that Elijah now worked for the coffin-maker.

"He wants to be friends again—Newte does. He came to mother to say he was sorry; and he got a warm welcome, for she'll never trust him more; but my brother is in two minds. It'll be France next week, and I think Nicholas would be glad to have Newte again in the boat for all his sins. As for me, I've forgiven the brute for what he did to me. It's easy to forgive people when the world's very kind to you and you feel happier than usual."

Thus cunningly she led to her own affairs and the great matter of her engagement, now to be broken to him. But he was concerned with the earlier part of her speech.

"Then Newte took my papers to Plymouth?"

"That is certain."

"He has no occasion to wish me ill."

"But others have belike. I saw Newte and your cousin together to-day on the cliffs. He at least loves you but little."

"He might injure me. He has challenged me to fight a duel. I confess his unexpected courage astonished me."

The girl was seriously alarmed at this news and explained her reason for being so.

"I don't fear that he could hurt you," she said, "but I do fear whether this challenge may be a blind. You say that there are unknown spies moving against you. If that is so, this man may know who they are. He may even be one of them himself. Supposing that he had read your letter, what would he have learned from it?"

"Little enough, save that I decline to do certain things that my friends in France desire me to do."

"That's to your credit in England."

"I know not which way to turn. Sometimes I think it would be wiser to get across, for France is more to me than this country."

She welcomed the idea.

"Full sure it would be well to go, if only for a while. Then why not do so and give these secret enemies the slip?"

"I dare not. If I go anywhere before the crash comes, it should be to London. But to do mean, sneaking and cowardly things would be death to me. I am a soldier and ready to shed my blood on the field; but I am not a spy or hired assassin. There is a plot against the life of Wellington, and rather than help my country in so vile an undertaking, I would proclaim it. Not for Napoleon's self will I use vile weapons."

So he spoke, and yet, within an hour, there had poured such a story into his ear that the unfortunate youth found himself deliberately considering the base methods he now condemned.

Faith again begged him to trust his fortunes in *The Grey Bird* and suffer Nicholas to carry him to France before gathering dangers increased and threatened his liberty.

But he would not consider it.

"My place for the moment is here," he said. "I must learn at Plymouth concerning my little fisher boat from Havre. If she has been and gone, then, indeed, I fear the worst, for that means that Newte must have had my letters from Paris and has given them to my enemies; while if he did not lie and the trawler has not been in, then it is time and more than time that she called again. But leave me and my misfortunes. You said a little while ago that you were a happy woman. I rejoice to know it and wish to God that I had some hand in your happiness. But you keep me out of your life, though I would give my soul to be in it and make your sunshine for you."

"You will always be in it," she answered him. "As long as I live, I shall be proud to remember that you cared for me. I can never thank you enough for all your goodness, and the thing you wanted, I would not have

grudged had fate willed it so. But now a mighty matter has happened to me, Master Paul—a wonder that showed me how impossible it was for me to have granted your prayer, and how base it would have been for me to pretend to love you. Now the real glory of love for a man has come to me and overwhelmed me. I cannot find words to describe it. There is no experience like it in earth, or heaven, for a woman. I love Robert Pawlet with all my soul and all my senses. He is my life. And I am his life. We seem to catch fire from each other. 'Tis almost fearful to feel such love for a fellow-creature. I—I—"

She broke off, for he was panting like a furnace. She could see the steam from his lips puffing out in the starlit air. He spoke in a voice that was strange to her, and though she had told her brother before this meeting that Deschamps could not frighten her, frighten her he certainly did.

"How long have you known this man?" he asked harshly.

"Not very long—I grant that. But time's swallowed up when you love. I've known him all my life; for I swear to God I never began to live till I did know him."

"Not twenty days has he been known to you; and for that you can fling me behind you and hold me a shadow of no account. You can cast my love on one side without remorse or pity. You can treat me worse than you would treat a dog and let my long, faithful year of worship and service count as nothing. Do you see what you are doing? Do you feel the insufferable wrong you are inflicting? Is it possible for any woman's bosom to harbour this unfaithfulness and fly from one whose every heart-beat was hers? Consider—for a man's life hangs on it. You had flattered hope—hope was my only food—and now, in an instant, you can bring the very substance and fabric of my life's dwelling-place crashing about my ears; you can utterly destroy the man who would have given his existence for you! Faith—Faith, look back—remember—recall these things that you have just told me, for I will not hear them—I

will wound my ears to deafness rather than they shall hear such an infamy."

He strode up and down before her while he spoke ; and now he sat by her again and clutched her wrists in both his hands, while his hot breath beat upon her face.

She sighed very deeply and perceived how hopeless it must be to argue with such an attitude.

" 'Tis hard for an ignorant girl with little power of speech to make you understand," she replied. " Love be not a thing we can choose for ourselves, any more than we can choose to escape from it, if 'tis willed that it should come. You, so clever as you are, should know that. This man is innocent of any wrong—unless to love a woman itself be wrong. He's robbed you of nothing that was yours ; he's took nothing from me that belonged to you, or any man. I was heart-whole till he come ; and but for him should have gone heart-whole to my grave. I can't help it. There's no sorcery nor witchery about it, unless love's self's a sort of magic."

But these excellent reasons were nothing to him. He was past reason and on the verge of excitations that would for a time unseat his reason.

" It is not so," he answered, " and since you seem dead to my plea and have willingly let yourself be seduced from me, then let the robber look to himself ! For he shall not come off victorious, even though you are on his side. Sore let and harassed though I am, with enemies in my own household and at my sleepless pillow, yet am I to be reckoned with, and this man, who has thrust in so brutally between me and you—let the wretch beware ! I am not one to be elbowed from the purpose of my life by a clown ; I am not one to see you deliberately hoodwinked and cozened, while I stand still and look on. For hoodwinked you are—deluded, blinded, deceived—by some force greater than you can measure. This stranger may be dabbling in black art or secret evil ; he may have sold himself to the fiend to win his way to you. Be sure of one thing : it is no honest and true love that he has wakened in your bosom. -Pure love is a flower of slow growth, and in God's good time you

would have come to love me and only me, as He meant you to do. You were sealed to me and I knew it—the revelation had come to me in my prayers. It was a sure, steady beacon-light above the darkness and tempest of my life. Therefore this wretch comes from the powers of evil, and I will treat him as evil and destroy him, before he has time to destroy you."

Faith was confounded by this display. She had expected a difficult and delicate scene, but never guessed that Paul's very reason would totter before her news. Yet now he spoke like a lunatic and promised terrible dangers. It was clear that Deschamps meant what he said. A frenzy of passion had swept over him like a flood and his love was turned to poison. Thus sudden and deadly peril threatened another, and while it seemed that for the moment he designed no violence against Faith herself, conceiving her as one sinned against rather than sinning, it was evident that he meant instant evil to Robert Pawlet. He made no secret of it.

She now exerted herself to win him from this attitude, and preserved a wondrous patience and self-control under provocation. But she had the sense to see that his wits were unhinged, and she knew that it might provoke a fatal issue if she grew angered in her turn.

She pleaded in vain, however, and the interview was not much longer protracted.

"Before God," he said, "I am wickedly wronged, and though for the present your eyes are veiled and you cannot see the truth, a time is coming when you will thank me for restoring your liberty. And then I'm very sure what is still hidden from you will be hidden no longer, and you will understand that your destiny is wrapped up with mine for ever. I forgive you this madness, because you are an innocent victim. It cannot be otherwise, but you must be rescued from the fate that hangs over you, and it is right and fitting that I am the one called to the work. All else sinks to insignificance for me beside that vital duty."

He left her abruptly and she sat a little longer in the

darkness, then sped straight to the station of the coast-guards on the cliffs, and arrived breathless, to find her lover busy writing up his log.

He heard all she had to say and allayed her fears.

"His head is turned for the moment, poor young man," he told her. "And if he still hoped and believed that there was a chance of winning you for his wife, 'tis small wonder that it should be. 'Tis a most fearful loss, and I can feel for him and judge what a crusher this must be. Of course he hates me—he wouldn't be human if he didn't—but this wild talk is vain—just the froth and bitterness of a disappointed man. Suppose it had been t'other way round and I'd courted you patient and worshipped the ground under your feet and gone in hope for a year? For still he hoped and wouldn't take your 'no' for an answer. No doubt it is the quality of fierce love, such as his, to be deaf to the word it don't want to hear. Suppose, I say, all that had been my case, and then he'd come along and swept you away from me at a breath and won in a day what I'd been fighting to win all through twelve months? Shouldn't I have hated him then, and spoke hard and cruel things against him, and accused him of the Evil Eye and all manner of villainies? Be very sure I should—and more: I might even in my rage and grief have threatened fearful deeds. A man's a man, well-born or simple, and 'tis but human nature for him to cry out, being smote so hard. But come the passage of time and the light of day, his temper will cool and the things he said look as mad to him as they did to you. Have no fear. 'Twas just the shock and the awful grief of seeing his hope in ruins that made him cry out to kill me. Men don't do such things in cold blood, and his blood will be cold enough before morning—poor soul!"

But she could not share his confidence.

"I know him better than you," she said, "and he's not the sort to come back to his senses in a night after this shock. For a season he will rage, and be it long or short, while the fit lasts he'll not be responsible for his actions and he'll stick at nought. Like enough after

some fearful harm was done—harm that none could ever undo again—he'd calm down and be a sorrowful, and penitent man and go haunted to his grave with his sins, for he's got a soft heart enough when he's sane, and none burns for justice like he burns ; but what would be the good of remorse and regrets, when he'd ruined two other lives ? 'Tis for you to be warned now, while his anger's at its height ; 'tis for you to keep temptation out of his way, and deny him the power to do the dreadful thing in his heart. You've got two against you : him and the devil, and if you love me, you'll act according and take all proper care till the poison has worked out of the frantic man and he is safe to walk among men again."

Somewhat impressed by this speech, Pawlet promised to exercise all reasonable caution. He could not view the possible peril as gravely as she did, but recognized its existence and felt little doubt that it might easily be avoided.

" I'll keep my weather eye lifting," he said ; " but I'd dearly like to meet him, man to man, and have it out, and try and get him to see sense. Still, since you reckon 'tis the last thing he will see just now, and that my presence might provoke him to some rash act, then I'll keep out of his way till the storm's blown over. Surely with such a clever and well-educated young man, it can't last long ? "

" And trust me," she said, " to do my share. His whimsies haven't fallen foul of me yet, and he's only sorry for my blindness, not much angered against me for loving you. For he thinks I am the victim of a trick. I'll see him, as I can, and hope you're right, when you say he'll soon come back to reason."

" I'm cruel sorry for him," declared her lover, " for it shows what he felt towards you, that he should suffer so fearful and go daft about losing you. I'm sorry for him, but these things don't run by rule, or if they do, the rules are hidden from us. For the minute the poor gentleman ought to be locked up with the other lunatics."

" I wish I could lock you up," she said. " I wish I

could have you under lock and key, Bobby, till this was put right."

He laughed at that, strove to make little of the danger, and declared again that, with morning, Paul Deschamps would find his disordered reason reaffirmed. But he could not calm her fears, and Faith felt loath to leave him.

It happened that he was not going afield that night and was able to promise that he would not leave the station until the following day. With this assurance she took leave of him and returned home. Her mother was long asleep, but Nicholas had not gone to bed and he listened with deep interest to her story.

Knowing the temper of the disappointed man, he shared Faith's view of the gravity of the occasion and declared that it behoved Pawlet to exercise uncommon care if tribulation were to be avoided.

"Master Deschamps might do worse than come to sea with me for a stretch and blow this tomfoolery out of his head," declared Nicholas; "but of course that won't happen. As for Pawlet, he'll stand to his work, and his work is such that anybody can count on a meeting between 'em sooner or late."

CHAPTER XVII

COLD COMFORT

MADAME DESCHAMPS had confided her uneasiness concerning Paul to her brother, and he had listened with supreme attention.

"Everything that has to do with you and yours, my dear Anna, is of the most vital importance to me, and I may tell you that I have noticed in the boy evidences not a few of unrest and tribulation. He was ever difficult and sensitive beyond common. You speak of love and jealousy—emotions not strange in your experience, and doubtless few women escape them, or the display of them in other individuals of both sexes. But I am an infant in such matters and must therefore consult the authorities. It will be a congenial task, and I doubt not that packed within the eloquent hosts of my library are a thousand utterances of the wise on these great subjects."

He was as good as his word and now returned, on an afternoon when Honorine and her brother were from home, and spent some hours with his sister.

"Art and philosophy throw a flood of light," he declared, "and I learn that love and jealousy are children of one mother, and that from love the bitterest forms of the hateful passion too often spring. And first of love. You are sure that you know the signs?"

"I loved and was loved," she answered simply. "Paul grows daily more like his father. My Pierre lives again in him."

"Hesiod makes Terra and Chaos to be Love's parents before the gods were born," declared Doctor Baldwin; "but not to weary your ears with ancient

mythology, we may turn to a practical examination of the power and effects revealed by this passion. I own that I am staggered to learn their extent, and the more I read, the more thankful I am to have escaped from them. It is written that Love rageth with all sorts and conditions of men : yet is most evident among such as are young and lusty, in the flower of their years, nobly descended, high fed, and such as live idly and at ease. This all points to Paul and the justice of your own suspicions. Heroical love—the *amor nobilis* of Savonarola—is a thing not evil in itself, but smiled upon both by Nature and the God of Nature. Now nothing sooner revives and waxeth sore again, as Petrarch says, than this noble love doth by sight. Therefore we may assume that the object of Paul's passion is at hand. Can you hazard a guess at her?"

"I cannot," declared Madame Deschamps, "but I found a lock of black hair in his pocket some time ago."

"She is then a dark wench. Now with respect to colour, Shakespeare says—"

"You're not helping me, my dear Upcott," murmured the lady. "The girl's colour does not matter in the least. The point is to know how we may assist our Paul. There is mystery here, and his love story, if such it be, runs awry. If he lived in a dream of joy and let his cup of happiness flow over, we should know that all went well with him ; but it is not so. He moves in darkness and is a child of storm. I fear his love is unrequited and turns his life into a daily bitterness."

"One has to hear these things to understand how contented and secure is your bachelor," he answered. "How gently and neatly and sweetly do we live who never looked on woman other than as a sister ! Even so the admirable Burton, who says that marriage indeed replenishes the earth, but virginity, Paradise. However, these reflections cannot be expected to comfort you. Fate hath scowled, and we must conceive Paul as suffering from the pangs of jealousy. He thirsts for the furtive and furious pleasures of love, and they are denied him. We will hope that this is a blessing in disguise ; but doubtless he does not feel it to be so. You

and I, however, having read Ariosto, are aware that no tongue can tell one hundredth part of the treacheries of women. We may therefore console our own anxieties with the thought that failure will after all prove better than success in the long run."

"All this is nothing to the point," she said.

"I am doing my best," he answered plaintively. "I am only concerned to lift your spirits and help you to feel that the Almighty often leads his sheep through parlous places. The sweetest pastures are only on the steepest mountains. But with respect to jealousy, I will be frank and tell you that it is a most dangerous and perilous evil. 'Where jealousy is the jailor, many break the prison.' Therefore I am the more anxious to find that Paul is not a prey to it. None pretend to doubt of its deadly character, and some learned doctors even question whether this bitter cancer of the soul can be cured at all—whether it will yield either to the bolus of religion, or the knife of reason. Such suspect that it can no more be eradicated than the gout, or those Switzers, commonly called Walloons, who, once they take possession of a castle or fortified place, can by no means ever be expelled again."

"What is this to the purpose, my dearest brother?" asked Madame Deschamps.

"I only cite; I say not so myself. Personally I do not take this gloomy view. Paul is young. We may pare the claws of the green-eyed monster in his case; we may mitigate his distemper and even ultimately cure it. Distraction, occupation, good counsel and the incitement of a contrary passion—these are all within our power. We must awaken fresh interests and drive this whimsey out of his head."

"For that matter, the times may soon give him other food to feed upon," said Anna. "There are clouds threatening our short-lived peace. Paul knows far more than we do of that, for he is in touch with France and becomes more and more occupied with his correspondence. I have terrible doubts in that direction also. He spoke of England's strength and how to learn it, and, in the privacy of his home circle, he does not hesitate

to utter sentiments that are treason on English soil. And I fear that Honorine is no better."

"Your children are certainly French, not English. I had hoped that the mother in them would prevail, as usually happens; but it has not done so in the case of your boy and girl."

"They are adherents of Napoleon Bonaparte, and I believe that Paul would stick at little if he could advance that fiend's cause in England."

"Happily it is beyond his power to do so. Surely after Marshal Soult rendered his loyalty and service to King Louis, Paul would have done better to follow that great man's example?"

"My son vows that Soult is no more a Bourbon at heart than he is himself. In Paul's opinion my husband's kinsman is playing a part at present. Indeed he speaks as one who knows. These things will not go beyond your ears, brother, otherwise my son and I would fall out—a grief that would kill me."

The doctor was seriously alarmed.

"We are now on the threshold of much mightier matters than the love of a man for a maid," he declared, "and I beg you say no more; for if any hint of another civil war in France reached my ear, I should regard it as my duty to communicate what I knew, however little, to Sir Simeon Glanvil and the Lord Lieutenant of the County. You speak in confidence and I shall respect that confidence and not suggest to Paul that I have heard a whisper of any treachery to his adopted country. But you have his ear, and I urge you to tell him with all the force at your command, that as an honourable son of France, it is his duty to pursue these machinations in France, not in England. God forbid that the word 'traitor' should ever be whispered against any child of Baldwin blood."

"My terror is that others already know and may at any moment do what you threaten," answered Madame Deschamps. "More than once Paul has hinted that he is in danger and that we must be prepared for tribulations. He speaks more openly to Honorine than to me—not about his private anxieties, but concerning

those that may be considered public ; and he has told her—implicitly, though not in plain words—that he has been asked by his friends in France to do certain things that his conscience will not permit him to do."

"In so far as conscience enters the matter, we may hope," answered the doctor. "I never heard of a Baldwin without a conscience, and I trust Paul to do nothing that would dishonour his family. I will take occasion to speak with him and beg him to bring his doubts and difficulties to me. Fortified as I now am with the wisdom of the ancients, it will be my privilege to reflect the light for my nephew.

Meantime another man and woman were very fully occupied with the same theme, and Gilbert Oxenham and Mademoiselle Deschamps discussed the sorrows of Honorine's brother.

They rode together with a groom behind them ; but to Tom Otter had been entrusted the task of escorting Honorine, since there were no man-servants who could ride at "Four Oaks," and he—quite alive to the situation—had put a substantial quarter of a mile between himself and the pair ahead.

"At last," said Oxenham, "we can get some words together. It seemed as though the time would never come. I still wait, but impatiently, to know more of the task you have willed to set me."

"I have not forgotten. Indeed I had thought of great and difficult matters ; but our affairs have driven them out of my head. Yet there is one dearer to me than myself, and you know that I would have him dear to you. I mean Paul. If you demand a task to try all your wit and strain your patience and your fortitude, I say again my brother. I do not wish you to be his keeper—indeed he would not endure the suspicion of such a thing ; but you are older than Paul, and wiser as I think. He has much to trouble him, and I should feel happier far, if I knew that you were concerned for him and anxious to advance his welfare."

"That indeed I am," he assured her. "I would do anything—anything in my power to lessen his trials ; but one can do so little. He is not wont to talk of his

affairs. There is indeed the duel, in which I second him ; but that need trouble none of us. The only wonder is that Warner Baldwin should have had the courage to challenge. I misdoubt there, for he is not a man to hazard a scratch on his own precious skin. However Doctor Budd has undertaken to represent him, He called two days ago at Tudor Towers and broke the matter to me. They are to meet at dawn ere long, on the sands at low tide. I have engaged that we shall have a boat there, to bring off either who chances to be hurt ; but feel no fear. Your brother is exceedingly safe. He will pink the lieutenant where he pleases and honour will be declared satisfied. Paul wanted pistols, but I would not let him choose them. He has, of course, no wish to shoot his cousin, but his cousin might shoot him."

" One cannot get a word with Paul nowadays," she declared. " He is never at home. Seek him early or late it is all one. His bed is hardly pressed. He appears when you least expect him, and when you count upon him, he does not come. He is going through great sorrows, and I may tell you, since we understand each other so well, that a woman is not the least of his woes. My friend, Faith Tresilion, has won Paul's heart. It is absurd of course—absurd and impossible, and nobody knows it better than Faith, though had she loved him, nothing would have separated them. But she does not. She values his friendship, naturally, and learns much from him ; but to be his wife is not possible, since she cannot love poor Paul."

" He'll live to be thankful. And now he must give her up, since she herself has chosen another. She is betrothed to Pawlet, the Customs man—Nicholas was laughing with me about it. Pawlet's teeth are drawn with a vengeance ! "

He began to talk about himself presently and took up the thread of his own love where it had been dropped so abruptly at Tudor Towers.

" Oh, little Honorine," he began. " There's no law against telling the truth, and though you've heard it once and it fell on a startled ear, hear it again you must.

I love you ; I want you ; I'll not live my life without you ; for it would not be worth living alone."

He brought his horse nearer, then nearer still. Their steeds, surprised at finding themselves in such close company, nuzzled each other and made gentle sounds. They seemed to know that the reins on their necks were loose and the lovers had their arms round each other. Then the horses went slowly side by side, and Tom Otter, coming incautiously too near, grinned cheerfully to see the abandon of the riders and stood stock still on his steed, that they might not hear his approach. He need not have been concerned. They were heart and soul together, and had the round world shaken, neither Gilbert nor Honorine would have been aware of it during those mighty moments.

She loved him and she told him so, while for his part he was overwhelmed at knowledge so stupendous and lapsed into a long silence.

They decided that for a moment the matter should not be known. There was no reason for concealment, but her love of mystery and romance prompted delay. She desired to meet him by stealth, make secret assignations far from her home, steal to him through fancied perils, rescue him from imaginary dangers.

"I almost wish that clouds hung over you, that I might dispel them," she said. "I should love to suffer great things for you and endure unheard-of privations, so that I might have your arms about me at the end, as they are now. And you, I'll warrant, feel the like and would fight a regiment for me and win me from a forest of robbers and dragons."

He laughed.

"I'd fight heaven and hell for you, if I was called on to do it, Honorine ; but I'm much happier as it is. The course of true love never did run smooth. So you may live in hope. If there are dark days ahead of Paul——"

Honorine's horse stumbled and she would have fallen but for his arm. The accident brought them to their senses and they found the hour was growing late. The last of the light was a dim duck green low over the weald

and woods ; and in it, like a drop of pale liquid fire, there flashed the evening star.

" Bid me fetch Venus for your dear bosom, and I will climb heaven and snatch it for you," he said.

They could not part until their next meeting was planned, and nothing would suit Honorine but they met at noon of night of the following day.

" I'll endure till then and keep my secret—the very keeping it will be a joy," she said. " And, so that I may at least creep and shiver and enjoy a delightsome tremor of fear, I name Hordell's Hall for the tryst ! There at midnight, Gilbert. And I must be there first, so you shall come a little later."

" Why so far away, sweetheart ? "

" For the terror and the creepiness ! You know the Death Coach of the Hordells has been seen again."

" So they say. I fear nothing in daylight, but these funeral boggarts are beyond me."

She jeered at him.

" You are afraid ! Then I will go to see the poor ghosts alone. I fear them not. 'Tis the obsequies of the last lord they are said to enact. And he was a great sinner and borne to his grave at secret midnight. Sir Simeon Glanvil takes the matter much to heart and begs my uncle to exorcise the spectres. But I pray him to do no such thing, for Daleham has little to boast of at best and the fame of the Death Coach must be spared to us."

She would not be denied, and though Gilbert, in whom love of romance was not a strong quality, would far rather have courted her in the seclusion of her mother's boudoir, he could but fall in with her whim.

" And come armed," she said. " One cannot tell who haunt Hordell's Hall by night. It is a place of sinister fame and be sure we shall be the only honest folk afield in the ruin to-morrow."

Her mood changed as' he took her homeward and her thoughts returned to Paul.

" Now I know what my dear brother must have suffered," she said. " Now, with the divine flame of love aglow in my heart, and in the rapture of knowing that you love me, I can measure a little of his bitter grief and

disappointment. He worshipped Faith and would have torn her away from her rough home like a pearl from its shell ; but it could not be, and I doubt not that when he hears there is no more hope, the iron will enter into his soul. I could pray that war might burst upon France again, if only for his sake, that he might forget a little of his scorching sorrow in the joy of battle."

"There is a better way than that," her lover assured Honorine. "I do not say at once, for he must doubtless suffer long and bitterly. But none ever died of this loss. And there is one who would very willingly console him."

"I know it," she answered. "Selina Glanvil loves him well enough."

"She does indeed. But she hides it close. I did not guess it—much too dull am I for subtle seeing. But Jennie knows and confided the secret to me. And if it was within my wits, in fulness of time to bring them together, then Paul would have a noble woman for his wife—one as beautiful and accomplished as she is patient and true."

"He lives in hope of war, as a child on food," she said. "And he is little likely to be mistaken. War there will be—and dreadful war. And no human power will prevent him from participating therein. But afterwards, when the end has come and Heaven has been good and brought Paul back to us—then mayhap he will find that peace is the more blessed thing and see life with gentler eyes."

They stood at the gates of "Four Oaks" and Tom Otter trotted up to them. Greatly daring and guessing there ought to be a guinea in it, Tom ventured a comment on what he had seen.

"Being groom to Mam'selle, I had to do my duty, your honour, and having eyes in my head I had to use 'em, though God forgive me for daring to keep 'em open if you're vexed to hear it. But so it was, and as the father of ten and a lover still, after being a husband for thirty year, as my Dorcas will tell you ; and as the faithful servant of Mam'selle's reverend uncle, I'm in duty bound to wish you both joy flowing over and over, and a happy home and a full quiver, and fine boys and girls to be a crown to your grey hairs and to close your eyes when your time comes. And——"

Here Honorine silenced him.

"No more, you audacious, ridiculous Tom," she said, "and if you breathe a word of this yet awhile, you'll make Master Oxenham and me very bitter enemies for life. We do not choose our secret should slip abroad just yet, and so I bid you respect it, if you want us to value you."

He promised, and he got his guinea.

"Not a word—not a syllable—not my Dorcas herself shall hear it, though she's a tomb for other people's secrets. But not even Dorcas Otter on my solemn word. And though I shall drink deep to your everlasting joy and happiness this night, have no fear 'twill slip me, your honour's honour. No, no—'tis one of the rare blessings I suffer from, that in my cups, where another man lets out every secret he hath and would tell the very crows in the trees the truth about himself, if they'd listen—'tis a rare blessing I say, that in my case, drink seals the door of my lips and puts a padlock on my tongue. If Tom Otter's talking, same as I be doing now, then you know he's sober; but if he's mum as a mouse and looking terrible wise and only opening his mouth to let in the edge of a mug, then you know he's drunk. So good-night and long life to your honours, and not a word shall escape me till Missy gives me the glad office to speak."

With this volley Mr. Otter led away Honorine's horse to the stable and left her to take a final farewell of her betrothed. He begged again to enter in and tell her mother their tremendous news; but she would not suffer it.

"Not yet—not yet—I must gloat over the secret a little longer. Not a word—not a whisper—to Paul, or the Glanvils, or anybody. We'll have more to say upon it to-morrow night."

"You most maddening lady! And where shall I find you? the ruin is large."

"I shall find you," she said. "Belike I shall frighten your wits away. But fear not; I'll kiss them back again!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SHADOW OF DEATH

NOW, all unconsciously, did Paul Deschamps stand within the menace of two dark perils, and it seemed little likely that any of those who wished him well would have power to save him from either. He was threatened by two enemies and the more terrible lurked within himself. For his reason had become clouded ; the shock and grief of his great disappointment, acting on a nature prone to melancholy, had upset the balance of his mind. Long brooding over his misfortune now led to tragical resolves.

At first he was disposed to blame Faith for a most treacherous desertion ; but the fires of his love smouldered through the ashes again and again : he could not condemn her and so set the blame upon the man. He scorned the theory of a sudden first love conquering Pawlet, and bringing him to his knees at Faith Tresilion's feet, ere he had met her half a dozen times ; and yet this was the fate that had overtaken himself a year before and the very manner in which he himself had acted. But the difference in the sequel made him dead to the likeness in the beginning of each romance, and he believed that more than honest courting must be responsible for Faith's surrender. He doubted not that she had become infatuated, and knowing how hard she was to win—how many had stormed the citadel of her heart in vain—Deschamps convinced his own fierce spirit that guile and fraud had gone to his rival's victory. From this belief to active hatred of the exciseman was but a step ; and from the attitude of hate, he passed into a determination to mark his hatred. His passion now shook his senses, and albeit he knew it not and

called it by another name, acute and malignant thirst for revenge mastered him, turned the pure foundations of his intellect foul and promised swiftly to plunge the unfortunate youth in crime. The Latin sources of his blood echoed these murderous emotions and his self-control began to depart. He planned a great sin, but knew it not for a sin; and such was the frenzy and extravagance into which his ruined hopes now threw him, that the idea of a fatal revenge entirely dominated his life.

And the stroke once resolved, no forces less than physical had power to arrest him. The sense that what he intended was but bare justice, the assurance that in removing Robert Pawlet for ever, he was but saving the woman he loved from ultimate disaster, were strong upon him. The evil liberated from his woe and misery took swift shape and, shutting out every other fear, hope or interest of life, he concentrated on this dire intention and considered how best and most swiftly to destroy the unconscious exciseman.

He, who so recently had exclaimed with horror at the plots directed against a great man; he who had refused with scorn and loathing to attempt anything against his mother's country, save in the way of honest and open warfare, now, by reason of this pollution at the springs of his soul, deliberately set about a mean and dastardly murder. An attempt, that must have filled him with indignation and horror if recorded of another, he now himself designed, and he held the deed just and right and reasonable—a course natural to himself as chief sufferer and necessary for the salvation of the woman he still loved.

Oblivious of all other considerations and forgetful of the dangers he had so recently feared for himself, Deschamps undertook the task of hunting out Pawlet's operations and making himself familiar with his habits, and his times of going and coming. That his rival's activities were largely nocturnal the other knew; and he welcomed the fact as being the more likely to give his enemy into his hand.

For three nights he hid on the coastguard path and

marked those that came and went by it. He found that the chief of the Customs seldom let a night pass without visiting his posts ; and he learned that he was also often present when the guards were relieved. Six men had Pawlet under his command, but their duties covered a wide extent of country. Indeed, since two were always off duty, no more than four patrolled the cliffs, and their extended and united beats ranged from Hordell's Head on the one side to Daleham Head on the other. But Pawlet himself made a fifth, for seldom a night passed but he visited one or other of his men ; while sometimes he varied the duties of the coastguard and took a couple of them to sea, that surprise visits might be paid to the caverns and snug coves that honey-combed the cliffs on either side of Daleham.

Deschamps kept secret watch on his rival's movements ; he found Pawlet pursue a certain routine, and since the night on which he visited Hordell's Head must throw him easiest at the other's mercy, Paul waited for it to recur. Then, somewhere about one o'clock in the morning, he knew that the exciseman would be on his way where the coastguard walk dropped near Hordell's Hall from the cliff to the beach, proceeded above high water mark for a hundred yards over the shingle, and climbed again to the cliff brow. Water fell into this little combe from the hills above, and the succession of falls by which the streamlet descended were not so steep, but many a sea otter climbed them and proceeded that way inland.

Here a man ascending from the beach would go slowly and offer an exceedingly easy target to any foe. The way was steep and narrow ; it was therefore almost certain that one suddenly stopped with a bullet in his head, must fall back over the cliff to the beach. Half way up stood the Toadstone—a considerable mass of red, conglomerate rock weathered to the likeness of its name—and behind this boulder Paul Deschamps determined to lie, that he might destroy Pawlet as he approached from beneath on his homeward way. He worked out his plot in every detail with the cunning of an unbalanced mind, and to him the foul crime that he

now contemplated appeared both just and seemly. It was his duty, so his shaken brain conceived, and he set about it with no more emotion than had he designed the destruction of a hawk, or weasel, or other predatory beast, that from his standpoint were better dead.

Two nights he waited—to find that Pawlet was engaged elsewhere; but on the third, he knew that his vigil would not be in vain.

The series of different circumstances that moved to one climax on this memorable night may be recorded in due order; and they began with Faith Tresilion. She had not seen Deschamps since their last meeting by the river Dale; but she went in a fear that increased as the days passed, and when the morning of this day dawned, her intuition became intolerable. She could not rest until she had learned something of Paul; and first she visited Honorine Deschamps, to inquire how he fared. No good news awaited her here, and her friend, taking Faith into the deserted and neglected garden of "Four Oaks," explained that the young man was scarcely ever seen by his mother or sister; that he preserved a morose and extraordinary silence, came rarely to meals and often spent much of the day and night from home.

"A fire is eating him alive," explained Honorine, "and now that I know what has happened to you, Faith, I can understand everything. Only time will restore his peace, and I wish time would fly for his sake. It is dreadful beyond all reason and I feel almost distraught over him, for I know now what he has lost. I, too, love and can guess what it must be to love in vain."

The other expressed her sorrow and declared her fear, but Honorine would not believe that there existed any need for alarm.

"He would not do what he threatened. It was only spoken in a moment of agony," she said. "His fearful grief made him utter such madness. Be very sure your lover is safe enough. It is not your fault that this has happened so."

"But it is in a way. I blame myself for doing Master Paul's bidding so oft," the other girl answered. "It

was wrong always to meet him when he ordered it, and to take his gifts and seek as I might to pleasure him. I thought no evil then ; but now I see that he built on my friendship and my willingness to obey and oblige. He did not realize how much his friendship was to me, or how proud a humble girl must feel to be valued by him ; and I did not realize how he viewed my conduct and how he supposed that no girl would meet him thus, unless she loved him dearly. And love him I did, and never hid it, but not as he wished and hoped."

Honorine understood that a different convention of propriety and the disparate ideas of class had made this situation possible ; but she continued to declare that Faith need feel no fear of violence ; then she told of her own romance and of the great joy that had come into her life. She enjoined secrecy for the present, and their interview came to an end.

But Pawlet's sweetheart was not convinced. She returned home and presently went to the station of the coastguard to see her lover. He was bound for Hor-dell's Head that night and laughed at her alarms. She asked him to let her share his nocturnal tramp, and assured him that a premonition of evil, beyond her power to explain or control, hung heavily upon her ; whereon he chid her very heartily and declared that such fancies were foreign to her nature and unworthy of one who meant to wed a Customs officer.

" If you suffer silly fears to fret you before we are married, what may not happen afterwards ? " he asked. " Full surely such a temper indulged in will run from bad to worse and become a scourge for us both."

But he could not shake her.

" The fact that I never fear for myself, or for anybody else, do make this mean something," she told him. " Don't think I shall pester you, or trouble you with trifles that a sane woman always hides in her heart ; but to-night has swelled out big and black in my soul, and that poor man's threats mean deeds as sure as I'm going to be with you now. I've asked after him to-day, and his sister has told me that he's in a terrible upstore still and noways at peace."

He considered. It seemed unlike Faith to take such a line and he regretted it, for he did not yet know her well and feared that this sentimental concern on his behalf would breed trouble in the future. For himself he had no fear and could not believe in the possibility of such a danger ; but she was not to be shaken, and he felt in no mood to forbid her anything. Against his will, therefore, he consented to allow her to see him on his way when the night came. She begged that Nicholas might also accompany them ; but this he refused to permit.

"Nay, nay," he said with laughter. "Master Nicholas must prove that he can be trusted with my business before he goes my rounds with me."

When night came the girl was there, and by that time Pawlet, rather lamenting his weakness, made it clear that he could only humour her in a measure.

"My work," he said, "by the nature of it has got to be secret work and my ways secret ways. Not the wife of my bosom, as you will be, please God, can share those secrets, for if she did, I should be unjust to my employers. You mustn't ask it or expect it."

"I don't and never shall," she answered. "I know what your work is, Robert, and I know you can't be expected to tell any man, or woman either, where your way leads, or whither. But to-night is different, and I cannot explain what I feel. It has grown from a mole-hill in my mind this morning, to a mountain to-night. I know, as I know I'm born, that I and only I can save you from trouble to-night, and you must be patient with me."

"I am," he assured her—"so patient that I'll let you walk a mile beside me and tell you exactly where I'm going and exactly when I'm coming back. So you can rest at peace. I pass over the cliffs across the downs to Hordell's Head, see my men where I've put 'em, and return by the lower cliff coastguard walk and follow it all the way home. There's a moon, and if my eyes ain't trained to seeing as well as a cat or owl, then they ought to be. I've got my carbine and know how to use it, so enough said."

She took in every word and hoped that, once off beside him, he would not turn her back, yet when the time came, her secret monitor—a presence that had never left her side that day—prompted her to obey him, and from a determination to cleave to him until his work was done, she found herself contented to depart.

Before that moment, however, an incident that neither could explain awoke their wonder. It wanted half an hour to midnight when, coming out from a lane on to the downs, they surprised a youth standing beside a gate with his back towards them. He was short and slight and clad in dark clothes, with Hessian boots that shone in the moonlight. Neither Faith nor Pawlet recognized him ; but as they passed the girl bade the youth "good-night" in friendly accents. He made no reply, however, but continued motionless with his back to them, so that his face might not be seen.

They passed on and wondered who it might be ; then having proceeded a hundred yards, Pawlet decided to return, accost the stranger and learn his business.

"He didn't look above fifteen years old," he said, "but whether or no, a nipper like that didn't ought to be mooning about there alone at this time of night."

"Did you mark his boots ?" asked the other. "I've only seen such boots on one man in Daleham, and that was Paul Deschamps."

"Could it have been him ?" asked her lover, and Faith assured him that it was impossible.

"He's of full man's height," she said, "as tall as you, or taller."

They returned quickly ; but the lad was gone. Pawlet hunted about in vain, then resumed his way and the incident was forgotten, until subsequent events reminded him of it.

To the parting place they came at last and stood and looked upon a moonlit sea. Black against the silver, a dozen trawlers were creeping out on the tide, and distant under the further arm of the bay the lighthouse's golden eye shone steadily. It was a night of peace and beauty, with a light breeze from the east which would blow harder when the dawn came. Earth was dark and still ;

on the sky slowly travelled amorphous masses of cloud which, sometimes drifting over the moon, first kindled to brightness as they approached the planet, then spread over it for the period of their passing, darkened the sky and flung down masses of gloom on the silver of the sea beneath. The cliff edge was hushed, but from half a mile away came the barking of a fox, while, near at hand, a white scut flashed now and again in the moonlight, where a rabbit darted from brake to brake.

And then it was, when Robert bade her turn and Faith had meant to plead with him, that the small voice spoke like a bell in her heart and she obeyed.

"I'll do what you tell me," she said, "but we shall meet again to-night—of that I'm sure. I know not when or where ; but it must happen. I'm happy now and content. No hurt will befall you, and 'tis thanks to me. What I've got to do be still hidden from me ; but not from the angel that's been whispering to me all day."

He laughed at her, kissed her and went his way, while she stood and watched him till he vanished in the dark masses of the furze and then turned, full of a strange trust and peace, to walk back to Daleham.

What was to happen as yet she knew not ; but that something must fall out to bring her back to her lover she surely knew.

In half an hour she was at the gate where the youth had stood. She considered the incident and weighed the position of the gate. It opened into a field of young corn, now in the green and showing well above the earth. Half a mile to the left, within its little forest of fir trees on the cliff, stood "Four Oaks," the home of the Deschamps ; while upon the right side there ran a road that passed the lodge gates of Tudor Towers. Of other houses only a few cottages were scattered beside the road. These facts told her nothing, and she was about to leave the gate, when she marked a figure moving down the side of the cornfield and approaching her. Suspecting that it must be the stranger back again, and guessing that he had lost his way, she waited for his return ; but before he reached her, the moonshine clearly showed that a man and not a boy now approached. He came

swiftly, and from time to time, above his shoulder, a flash of light glinted along his gun-barrel.

Here, then, was the answer to her secret voice. She fell back, crouched in the hedge and remained motionless while, thirty yards away, the armed man came through the gate, made it fast after him and strode off to the coastguards' walk, half a mile beneath. But she had recognized Paul Deschamps, for he stood a moment after fastening the gate, and the light from above fell full upon his pale face and flashed in his eyes. Quite ignorant of her presence he went on his way; but he proceeded listlessly, as one who was too early for a tryst. She followed, stalking him with amazing craft, now dipping to the earth when he stood still, now creeping on again as he advanced.

A rough path fell zig-zag down the cliff presently, running into the coastguard road beneath; and when Deschamps came hither, she stopped above and watched him descend, herself hidden in a brake of dead fern and stunted blackthorn that ran along the cliff edge. From here she was able to mark his movements, and not until he reached the coastguard way and turned to the left hand along it, did she follow. But Faith did not descend. Instead, by hastening along the brow of the cliff, she came presently where the otter-haunted stream fell through a little dingle and the ground shelved. Only by wading in the rivulet itself might she here get further sight of Deschamps; but by so doing it was possible from above to mark his progress, and the noise of the brook, where it tumbled to the sea by a succession of falls, concealed the slight sound that she made. At a point beneath her, the stream leapt boldly from the face of the cliffs and fell in a little waterfall of thirty feet; and at this spot the road fell steeply and descended for three hundred yards to the beach. Here it was, at the sharpest acclivity, that the Toadstone Rock jutted upon the coastguards' way; and now, from above the waterfall, Faith was able distinctly to see the man beneath her take up his stand and look to the priming of his gun. She knew why he had come, and she also knew that within an hour her lover would ascend

and offer himself, an easy target against the silver of the sea, as he climbed slowly upward to the Toadstone.

Moments were precious now, but her heart beat no quicker than physical exertion made it, and her mind was clear. She lost not a second and began at once to retreat to the summit of the cliff. A simple problem lay before her, but the solution was not so simple. To reach the road that Pawlet must travel and intercept him was her task ; yet to do so presented difficulty, for his path, until it fell to the beach before ascending again, where death lay hidden for him, could not be reached from above until she had retraced her way nearly to Hordell's Head ; and by that time Robert Pawlet would have long passed by. Most of his road ran under precipices and might not be approached from above. Her only course was to go backward, descend to the beach nearer Daleham, and proceed to the spot where the coastguard road opened on it. This she now prepared to do, ran like a boy, when she had reached the summit of the cliffs again, and presently descended to the shore. The tide was out, and for a mile she proceeded over the hard, firm sand, thereby making better progress than it was possible to make above high-water mark over heavy shingle ; but when she knew that the watching Frenchman's eyes would mark her, she turned shoreward and crept along beneath the cliffs hidden from his vision. Thus she came to the coastguards' walk, three hundred yards beneath the Toadstone, and then, pursuing it, hastened along the way that Robert Pawlet must now be wending.

Panting indeed she was by this time and well-nigh beat. She had lost count of minutes and every moment was an age. She flung herself down by the way and pressed her hand over her riotous heart, for it seemed to her that that drum-beat of it would surely be heard even where a madman sat above her on the other side of the goyle.

Then came Pawlet, striding briskly along, and' she ran to him and flung herself into his arms that she might feel them about her.

He perceived her distress ; but it vanished swiftly,

for he was safe ; and soon he learned how she had saved him. He listened to her story, and while his first purpose was to push forward cautiously and stalk the stalker, in a moment he saw the folly of any such attempt.

"He's mad," said Faith. "He's mad, if ever an unhappy wretch was mad. To go to him now would mean death for one or both of you—and foolish, needless death. He may recover ; time may cure him. Come back with me and leave him there. We can do nothing now. To-morrow you can say what's happened, tell Doctor Baldwin about it, and see that the right thing is done."

"Be it so," he said. "You've saved my life this night. For the rest of the night, I'll do as you bid me."

They waited a little longer, till the girl was rested, and then silently descended to the beach and proceeded homeward by the way that Faith had come. But the supreme incident of the night was yet to fall, and presently, after he had heard her story from the moment that she left him, Pawlet told Faith of a strange incident that had fallen to his experience.

"'Tis a night of mystery," he said. "What think you I have seen ? I got me to Hordell's Hall and thought to take the shortest way to the Head through the ruin under the trees. 'Tis there my men whisper the Death Coach can be seen, and more than one I know has sworn he's seen it. But 'twas life not death met me. Moving swift and quiet, I came round a corner to find two folk sitting together so close as eggs in a nest. And one was the slight, slim party that stood by the field gate up over, and t'other was a big fellow. In the moonlight they sat and kept each other warm. But the little one ! Why, she—for a she it was—she had her hair down and he'd got his arms round her and his face pressed against hers ! I knew what he was feeling like, thanks to you, and loving you as I do, I felt kind enough to all other lovers. They started apart and she gave a little cry. You could see even in that light that they were quality, but who the mischief they might be and why for they wanted to go spooning in that horny-winky place after midnight, only love knows. Love will drive folk to

madness seemingly, as that poor chap, lying up on the cliff with murder in his heart, has found out ; and 'twill make girls and boys play innocent pranks as well, though for why that maiden wanted to put on the breeches, who can say ? ”

“ Was he a big man with a kindly voice and a jolly laugh ? ” she asked.

“ That he was—that much I can tell. ‘ Your pardon, Master,’ I said, ‘ I’m terrible sorry to scare you, though you scared me just as much. I’m a lover myself and would have given you a wide berth if I’d knowed you was here.’ With that he laughed and told me all was well. ‘ Tis the exciseman,’ he said to his girl ; and then to me, ‘ Have no fear, friend, we’re not smugglers ! ’ I went my way and the girl, whoever ‘ twas, knew me better than I knew her, for I heard her name me to the gentleman afore I was out of earshot.”

Faith felt interested in his story and had no difficulty in finishing it.

“ The rest I can tell you,” she declared. “ Without doubt you surprised Mademoiselle Honorine and her lover, Master Oxenham ; though why they should have chosen that haunted hole to make love in, or why she should have gone forth in boy’s clothes, who can say ? How strangely do things work ! To think of her happy as woman can be in her lover’s arms and him —poor doleful wretch, lying yonder to put a bullet——”

She was interrupted, for the sudden bellow of a gun shattered the peace of night and an explosion reverberated back and forth among the cliff faces ; but above the din of it, thin and dreadful, rang out the shriek of a woman.

The listeners stood still and the girl’s knees shook under her.

“ Good God—he’s——”

She stopped and Pawlet finished the sentence.

“ He’s shot his sister ! ”

For a moment not a word passed, while the echo of gun-fire returned gentle and faint from the distant cliff faces. Then the man sprang to action.

“ Come,” he said. “ You’ve got to haste again to-

night. We may be in time to do some service. 'Tis my place to go now."

She followed him without answering, and they went back by the way they had come. He outdistanced her over the shingle and was already out of sight when she reached the bottom of the cliff. But even his pace of necessity was slow and many minutes elapsed before he reached the Toadstone.

CHAPTER XIX

A MAN HUNT

HALF an hour was past before Pawlet, followed by Faith, climbed to the Toadstone ; and when they did so, the place was silent and deserted. No sign of a human being awaited them. They made such search as they were able in the light of a setting moon, then went their way.

But the exciseman's fear was justified. A fearful experience had overtaken Deschamps, and it is necessary to keep vigil awhile with him.

Weary of waiting, he had shifted his ground more than once behind the rock that hid him, and more than once he had traversed the full extent and significance of the vile act he contemplated ; but there was no shadow of turning. He had only to consider his fearful loss, and regard the long vistas of his life, stretching drearily forward without the woman he adored, to feel the poison of hate and the lust of revenge knit his hand and eye. He was plunged deep in a reverie when suddenly the crucial moment came. The sound of footsteps struck his ear and he heard a light, brisk tread ascending from the beach. So swiftly came the traveller, despite the steepness of the path, that Paul was hurried in his aim. He had already marked a spot little more than twenty paces distant and intended to fire upon Pawlet when he reached it. Now the figure of a man appeared and approached, and since the uncertain light merely showed that it was a man and the watcher dreamed not of any other man but one, he took aim hastily, drew trigger and fired.

The answer was a scream and the figure before him fell.

But her cry had told Deschamps that it was a woman, not a man he had fired upon. He dropped his gun and sprang forward, while at the same moment another man, who was ascending behind the stricken girl, hastened from below.

Oxenham and Honoree, returning from their tryst, had chosen the cliff way homeward and she, running on in front, had been mistaken by her brother for his victim.

Now the men knelt on either side of the fallen girl, to find her as it seemed quite dead. They spoke together and Gilbert told the other of his betrothal and Honoree's romantic plan to meet at Hordell's Hall, while Deschamps likewise made a clean breast of it.

"I was here to murder a man," he said. "And Providence played this fiendish trick upon me."

He searched the unhappy maiden as he spoke, loosened the collar that circled her throat and found presently that she was alive.

"She is in a dead faint," he said. "It was the awful shock that rendered her unconscious. Thank God I missed her."

But the other pointed to blood. Then suddenly Honoree recovered consciousness and looked into their faces. For a time she could not speak, but only pointed to her shoulder. They examined it and found the ball had grazed her shoulder and inflicted but the slightest flesh wound. She was, however, suffering from the horror of this sudden danger and felt herself still in the shadow of death. But this did not prevent her activity. Indeed she prayed them to leave the spot with the utmost expedition, and having staunched the slight flow of blood, the men supported her on either side and helped her to the summit of the hill. Her spirits soon revived, and before they reached "Four Oaks," the girl, with a Gallic levity that amazed her lover, was actually laughing at herself and her own folly. But it was not natural laughter. She continued over-wrought and hysterical until they reached her home. Then Oxenham took his leave until the morrow and Paul helped Honoree to her room and fetched her stimulant. Their mother was long since

asleep, and they entered secretly and silently to avoid rousing the household.

He did not leave his sister until she was comfortably in bed and her shoulder dressed. But the wound proved to be of the lightest, and Honorine, having examined it in a hand mirror, foretold that her white skin would not even be scarred. She confessed her own ridiculous plot to go to Oxenham dressed as a man, and she blamed herself for her stupidity ; but guessing very well the awful emotions that must be moving in her brother's heart, spoke not of him, and made as light of the whole matter as possible. None knew what had happened but Gilbert Oxenham, and none else need know. For Paul's part, he said but little, for he desired to be alone with his own thoughts.

This experience came crashing with terrific force into his heart, and its grim reality acted upon the unreal and chimerical calenture into which his passion had thrown him. Now he stood face to face with the truth of himself and perceived with terrible poignancy the road along which his evil angels had led him. He thought of his mother and of the young, happy life that had hung on a thread that day. From a state of numbed and bewildered despair, in which he sat till the morning broke, he entered slowly into another and a purer atmosphere. His soul shivered nakedly ; but it was cleansed ; he emerged from the demon-haunted darkness in which he had wandered ; he grew sane and sobered and mordantly alive to his own madness. Half a dozen times during that long night he crept to his sister's door, and once she cried out in her sleep and he came to her and took her hand and reassured her ; then with morning, haggard and torn, as though devils had hardly departed from his heart, he fell humbly upon his knees and with a wordless prayer welcomed return of reason.

But it had only returned to him after leading him to the very threshold of an unutterable tragedy ; and now, with a spirit chastened and an emotion of unspeakable thankfulness at his escape, he came back to life again, to find all other troubles hidden by this terrific shadow.

That he was spied upon and suspected he still feared ;

but nothing had happened of late days to increase his disquiet, and now there came intelligence in the newspaper that Wellington had gone to Vienna to attend the congress of great powers assembled to regulate the affairs of Europe. Any plot that might have existed against him in England was therefore frustrated, and Paul felt another weight off his mind. The morrow would bring his meeting of honour with his cousin, but the issue of that concerned him little : he was more occupied with atonement in other directions. And his remorse first led him to contemplate confession. Infinite and burning love woke in his soul for Honoree, and the emotion seemed to purge much of his bitterness and pride. He found himself gentler and humbler and anxious to let his own blessed escape breed some sort of happiness for others. Thus, when at the noon of the next day, he met Faith and Robert Pawlet walking together to lay the horror of the previous night before his uncle, he stopped them.

"Friends," he said. "It was meant that I should meet with you to-day, and I was coming to seek you. You must walk aside and listen to me, for I have done fearful evil, I have been a murderer at heart ; but it has been decreed that I should escape the consequence of my crime. I am spared to atone. You need have no fear of me."

He laid the truth bare and told Pawlet all that he had intended to do and all that he had done. He asked their forgiveness and revealed a contrition and humility that it had been impossible to question.

"If God there be," he said, "He saved me from eternal destruction last night, and surely for some worthy purpose was I saved."

"Doubt it not, Master," returned Pawlet. "And I, who believe in God and have seen His ways and wonders, shall thank Him for us all, that He held your hand and turned your bullet, and that He has now restored your wits."

"None else need to know about it," said Faith.

He left them then, little guessing where the girl and he would come together again before the day was done ;

then not considering how this impetuous confession might affect those who heard it, he returned home. Honорine was cheerful and happy, and in no way the worse for her experience; but fate now willed that real and not make-believe romance lay ahead of her.

Oxenham came to drink tea with the Deschamps, but preserved absolute secrecy as to the events of the previous evening. Satisfied that Honорine was well, he announced their secret in the ear of his betrothed's mother, and though ready to accept the news, Madame Deschamps could not conceal her emotion. To lose her daughter was only a question of time, and the lady knew it; but now that the certainty confronted her, it brought inevitable sorrow for her own loss. She revealed, however, nothing but happiness before the joy of the young man and maiden. The circumstance served to distract her mind from Paul, and he, indeed, absented himself largely during this day, for he felt the need of self-communion and peace. His mind, winged with a remorse that increased rather than diminished, now cried to him to make practical atonement for his sins, and he cast about eagerly how he might do so. But forces unguessed and unseen were busy on his account; the second peril, previously mentioned as haunting his footsteps, had come close and lay in his path. From that first dire horror born of his own soul, he had escaped; from this lesser evil, brought against him by his fellow-men, it appeared impossible that he could escape.

Oxenham hinted at it presently, when Deschamps joined the ladies and drank tea with them; but the incident he reported carried no significance to the ears of those who heard it, and not until after nightfall did they remember what he had told them.

"I rode afield to-day to see some trials of ploughing nigh Plympton," he said, "and I passed a body of troops upon the march. Then came gipsies and one of whom clamoured to cross my hand with a piece of silver. The wench told me that I should wed a maid with a thousand a year, blue eyes and pale golden hair!"

"Alas!" laughed Honorine, "if that is so, then you waste your time to have made me love you."

"I bade the lying baggage go to the devil, her master; and then I met a bear-leader with a brown bear. The roads were amazingly lively. Finally I passed that venerable blackguard, Abednego Egg, who looks like a Bible patriarch, but who in truth, Doctor Baldwin assures me, is a very great rascal. He was in his tilt-cart; but not alone. Your cousin, Warner, accompanied him, and they were doubtless returning from Plymouth."

Silence fell suddenly, for the mention of Warner's name sent three of the party to consider what the coming day would bring forth. Madame Deschamps remained in ignorance of the duel, and they were at pains not to let her know.

Honorine spoke of the Tresilians and of her friend's betrothal.

"Faith and I always vowed that nothing would ever make us wed," she told Oxenham; "yet now both of us are in the same plight and both in love."

"Nicholas sails at dawn to-morrow," he said, "and I think he's heartily sorry that I don't go with him; but when he heard two reasons, he perceived that it was impossible on this occasion. Hardened bachelor that he is, he thought my engagement no just cause; but the other——"

He broke off, for the other reason referred to the approaching duel.

"The ploughing matches were exciting, though you'd never guess such slow business could be," Oxenham told them. "When we wed, Honorine, I shall think upon my farms and lands and become even such a bucolic gentleman as Sir Simeon himself."

"Never," she prophesied, "the sea will always be your first mistress and your first love. I myself shall come but second."

At this challenge he laughed and led her by a look to understand that he would answer it when they were alone. He left them anon; but Fate willed that, before many hours had passed, Oxenham was again at "Four Oaks."

After nightfall two men, actuated by very different motives, rushed into the home of the Deschamps with evil tidings. Lieutenant Warner Baldwin was the first to come, and Gilbert Oxenham followed him a few minutes later.

Of the lieutenant, it may be said that he had wasted no moment of his time. His schemes now matured and he came to seek one whom he had betrayed.

The man had put himself in communication with the authorities at Plymouth, deeming his cousin's crime of a military character. Now working with them he had planned the particulars of Paul's arrest. It was his purpose, however, not to be associated with the Frenchman's discomfiture, but at the same time he so ordered the situation, that Deschamps should be arrested prior to the proposed duel, thus rendering himself safe from any possible injury, while appearing ready enough to defend his wounded honour.

That day he had been to Plymouth, hoping that the Havre trawler might be back from France; but she did not return again and he had his journey for nothing. He had passed a small company of troops with a sergeant, and he was under secret orders from Plymouth Citadel to assist them in effecting an arrest. At the moment when he had hurried in to "Four Oaks," his work had already been done, and the soldiers, under cover of darkness, were securely posted round the house. Then bidding the sergeant and four others wait but a few moments, he burst into the home, apparently choking with emotion, to give an alarm. But he knew that it was too late.

Subsequent events happened almost more quickly than they can be told, for while Warner expressed the utmost concern and tribulation, there came Oxenham with the same story.

"The men I passed this morning, the soldiers—they're here! The house is surrounded, but you've got to make a dash for it, Paul!"

The other remembered his fears.

"A traitor has done this," he said.

Meantime Warner spoke with Madame Deschamps,

while his ear was cocked for the soldiers, and Oxenham and Honorine exchanged swift speech.

"It's his only chance," he said, "and if he gets through, he may give them the slip. But to do that he'll need help from outside—from the sea."

In a dozen more hasty words he explained her part to Honorine, and without an answer the girl sped away; then Oxenham clapped Paul on the shoulder, where he stood irresolute, and bade him nerve himself.

"Come," he said. "There's half a chance yet. Follow me down the cliffs to the beach—I'll tell you as we run."

Paul, strung to action, followed his friend and they leapt out of the window into the dark garden. Then Gilbert explained his purpose. The guards were round the house; but before they reached them, Deschamps stopped and concealed himself in a little summer-house hidden under the trees. Then Oxenham pushed boldly forward and ran within a dozen yards of the soldiers drawn all round "Four Oaks." They were closing in as he came; but now man shouted to man and the fugitive found himself hotly pursued. Suffering the red-coats to keep him within sight, he took them a mile, then turned and headed back to "Four Oaks." There, however, as he guessed, others awaited him and he was caught, bound and brought triumphantly into the hall of the dwelling.

Elsewhere, Warner Baldwin had been comforting his aunt and endeavouring with gentle words to allay her fears.

He was aware of the hue and cry without, but his own directions had been such that he felt no possibility of failure could follow [them]. He had, however, counted without Oxenham and little guessed at the trick now successfully played. While he pretended to hope that Paul would soon clear himself and return to his home, a free man, his senses were strained to hear sounds of the capture, and presently he did so. A confused babel of voices filled the hall, and Madame Deschamps insisted on going out to bid her son farewell.

The lieutenant prayed her to avoid the ordeal, but

she would not, and she went forth, crowned with sorrow, to the soldiers. They were reclining round about, panting and mopping their heads, while one or two, who had fallen in the chase, attended to their bruises.

As she appeared the voice of Sergeant Bulstrode rose with all due solemnity.

" You are arrested, Monseer Paul De-champs, for conspiring against the safeguards of the realm and for plotting with the enemies of England by secret correspondence in cipher, which has fallen into the hands of the garrison of Plymouth and——"

Then Paul's mother came forward and the prisoner, uttering a shout of laughter, declared his identity.

" I, faith, sergeant, I've been much wondering why your men were so eager for my company," he said ; " but since they all joined chase against me, I felt it a pity not to give them a run for their trouble. Know, however, that I am a peaceable and law-abiding subject of his gracious Majesty, that my record is familiar to all and sundry, and that my name is Gilbert Oxenham, of the manor of Owlscott in North Devon. Madame Deschamps herself and Lieutenant Warner Baldwin here will witness my identity."

The man turned to Baldwin, who could only declare the truth of Oxenham's statement. But he had heard Gilbert mention the beach to Paul, as he sped from the drawing-room but fifteen minutes before, and now his task was to direct a further hunt without appearing to do so.

He confirmed the bound man's statement ; then, under pretence of getting the soldiers from the house as swiftly as possible, drew Sergeant Bulstrode aside and spoke with him beyond hearing of the rest.

He told him that Deschamps had without doubt waited until his friend drew the hunt, and then descended to the beach. He explained the road by which he must have run and directed how the pursuers should be divided into two parties so that they might go down to right and left and then close in.

" He will not expect you and you can hardly miss him," he explained. " But delay not a moment. Once

descend and pin him between the two parties, he cannot escape, for there is no other way up. It is a little beach under the cliff beneath this house ; but the only paths from it are those you will now take."

A moment later the soldiers were called, and while one party went through the grounds and descended the road that Paul had traversed ten minutes before them, the other followed Baldwin's direction and hastened to a further track which also descended to the sea. From this small foreshore of shell and shingle no escape was possible, and Warner felt small fear of the issue. He returned to his aunt and explained that he hoped the splendid ruse of Oxenham would prove successful. She, poor soul, distracted, cried for her children and tramped restlessly up and down, waiting for news of them. Her distress became so great that Warner Baldwin, who indeed desired as much as she to learn the issue, left her presently to fetch Doctor Baldwin ; while as for Oxenham, he had scarcely been liberated, when he hastened after the soldiers to gather their movements. His amazement and chagrin may be judged when he discovered that they were on the right track and stood almost certainly to secure their man. What he could do to arrest their progress he did ; but Sergeant Bulstrode was not prepared to take his advice.

" You're a very clever young gentleman," he said, as he hastened down to the beach, " and I'm too old a bird to be caught twice in the same cage. I don't like man-hunting, for it ain't my job ; but I must do what I'm here to do, and as it's very clear you're not on our side but t'other, I don't want no advice from you."

" Why are you coming hither ? Is it likely that he would run into this trap with all the world to choose from ? "

But the soldier did not reply to this question.

They hastened on and soon the pebbles glimmered beneath them.

Then Sergeant Eulstrode spoke.

" I warn you," he said. " I warn you, young man, to do nought that can interfere with my duty. What you've done a'ready might earn you a long rest behind

iron bars, if not a longer one in your grave, for traitors and them that help traitors are shot out of hand. But these be times of peace, not war, so I'll let you go free so long as you take no further hand in the game."

They stood now on a narrow beach not more than three hundred yards in extent. Gilbert judged only too certainly that Paul was hidden here, as far as night and a sky of clouds could hide him. But the diffused illumination was less brilliant than clear moonlight had been, and some search might yet delay the finding of the fugitive, though there was scant cover here to conceal him.

"'Tis all up with my gentleman now," said Sergeant Bulstrode; "unless he had wings like a seagull, or fins like a fish, there's no way out of this for mortal man."

CHAPTER XX

FAITH BEARS NO MALICE

WHEN Honoree left her home, she ran to the village for her lover bade her do so. Only one possible course flashed into his mind during the scanty time for thinking, and though afterwards it occurred to him that better plans might have been made, the man most involved did not think so. While therefore Paul, upon Oxenham's disappearance, waited only for the soldiers to hasten after his friend, and then, when all was quiet, broke cover and made his way to the beach, Honoree ran as fast as she was able to Daleham and presently, breathless, reached the cottage of the Tresilions. The hour was late, but to these folk day and night appeared to be alike, and neither Nicholas nor Faith was at home.

Mrs. Tresilion always welcomed man, woman or child who called to visit her, and at Honoree's knock she woke from a doze, trimmed the candle with her fingers and shook the tobacco ashes from her majestic bosom.

"Come in, whoever you be," she said, and then, when Honoree appeared—

"Why, God's goodness, missy ! what's a pretty little paroquette like you doing all alone in the dark, when only owls and night-jars be on the wing ? Sit down and have a thimbleful of drink along with me, there's a dinky dear ! 'Twon't hurt 'e—'tis something very special and goeth down like cream and honey, that the devil's mixed with the point of his tail. And of course you've come for Faith, not an old, weather-beaten war-horse like me. But she's spooning somewhere along with her gauger."

"Let me speak ; let me speak, dear Mother Tresilion !" cried the girl. "Dreadful things are happening,

but there's a chance with your son's help that we may yet save my brother. 'Twas Master Oxenham, who thinks the world of Nicholas, that sent me running here. The soldiers are upon us to arrest Paul; but he has, I hope, escaped them so far, though I cannot be sure. We must lose no chance of bringing him off, and 'tis work for your boy."

"And gladly will he lend a hand," she said, "and if I'd got the use of my lower limbs instead of being only half a woman—though the best half, God be thanked—I'd be up and at the dogs myself. Many's the man that's felt my thump on his noddle. 'Tis this way, pretty missy, Nicholas sails a bit after two o'clock—two hours hence you might say, for 'tis midnight now. He's aboard to-night and all his men are along with him."

"I know, I know; but how to get to him in time? Every moment is precious. It may be too late already."

"Can you row?" asked Mrs. Tresilion, and Honorine said she could not.

"What the mischief they teach you gentlefolk, I don't know," began the old woman, then came the welcome sound of quick feet and Faith returned.

"Be off!" cried Emma. "Don't waste another moment. Tell her as you run along to the quay. She can row—don't you fear for that. Run—run, the pair of you!"

Her startled daughter followed Honorine without any more waste of words, and as they hastened through the sleeping village, Paul's sister explained the situation.

"One cannot be sure whether he is really on our little beach, or whether Gilbert's plan miscarried, but we must leave nothing to chance," she said. "And first we must get to your brother. Everything depends on him."

"If he's not followed," answered Faith, "then all's plain sailing, and we can bring him off shore easy enough; but if he is—"

"They wouldn't follow him, because if all goes right, they won't know where he is," explained Honorine. "The thing is to get my brother to *The Grey Bird*, and ask Nicholas to delay not a moment, but put out to sea. Once in France, Paul will be safe enough."

Faith it was who planned their next action. To the quay they came, where a few empty trawlers and a small trading coaster or two lay beside the wharf. Then, into the first boat she could find, the elder girl leapt and bade Honoree follow.

"We shall want you," she said, "and you need fear nought, for the sea's smooth and the wind off shore. Jump in and I'll tell you the reason while I row."

Honoree, questioning nothing, obeyed, and then, while Faith, with steady strokes and strong, sculled the borrowed dinghy into the bay, she explained.

"Time's pressing," she said, "and I don't want to waste a minute of it talking to Nicholas. You can do that. I'm going to take you straight to *The Grey Bird* and leave you aboard. And you must tell him what's happened. Then he can get his anchor and make sail and come after me. When he's off your beach, he can drop the boat and come inshore, and if all goes right, I shall have your brother safe by that time."

Honoree perceived the drift of the plan and only prayed that no unexpected difficulties might present themselves. The night was of a diffused, dim light, for clouds obscured the moon and lessened while scattering her radiance. *The Grey Bird* rode half a mile from shore and Richard Copleston was the only man awake upon her when Faith came alongside. She hailed while yet she was thirty yards away; then slipped her oars and drew level.

The amazed Richard, staring over the side, perceived two women. Then Faith bade him help Honoree aboard and call her brother.

"Missy will tell you all that's doing, Dick," she said, and then she quickly vanished, rowing towards the shore, but in a different direction from which she had come.

The girl was soon abreast of the cliffs which fell beneath "Four Oaks," and then she slowed her progress and began to creep in cautiously. The tide was out, and beneath the stretch of sand now visible, there extended black, seaweed-covered rocks into the sea. The water swelled along their ledges and lifted and dropped the heavy weeds that fringed them.

Faith was soon conscious that all had not gone well ashore. Her eyes were keen, and long before she was within touch of the rocks, she had seen figures moving hither and thither upon the beach. There were a score, and under the cliffs lanterns also moved. The people exhibited haste and she heard shouts and counter shouts. Anon she saw men upon the rocks also ; but it was clear that they sought in vain, and she guessed that Paul had hidden, where landsmen would not be likely to look for him—in the water itself. He might be concealed under one of the weedy ledges with his body in the sea. There was nothing for it but to wait and trust that he would mark the arrival of a rescuer. As yet the soldiers had not seen the boat, but now they did so and a shout proclaimed it. Thus, in all ignorance his pursuers acquainted Paul with the fact he most desired to know. For fifteen minutes he had already been concealed, half buried as Faith suspected in the weed, with a large part of his body under water, and now, feeling that the cold would soon destroy his power of motion, he was about to swim for it and trust to luck, when he heard the shout that a boat was off the beach.

Not a moment longer he delayed, but cast his jacket and boots from him, and swimming as low as he could slipped out to sea.

Meantime Sergeant Bulstrode, with Oxenham still beside him, had hailed the boat.

"Come in, or I'll fire on you !" challenged the soldier ; but no answer reached him and the boat continued motionless rather more than a hundred yards from shore.

"It's a woman !" cried Oxenham. "Man alive, you wouldn't fire on a girl !"

"In the name of duty I would," announced the other. "But we'll call her out of gunshot."

She was not and the sergeant knew it ; but who shall blame him for uttering this opinion ?

Unfortunately, however, the same could not be said of Paul, and he had swam but another twenty yards when a man on the rocks saw him.

"There's a keg or a head !" he shouted and ran for his

gun, which he had left twenty yards behind him on the rocks. Others also hastened up, and Faith, keenly alive to every movement ashore, heard the soldier's exclamation and saw where he pointed. As yet she had not marked the swimming man, but once again the irony of chance decreed that his pursuers should be of the greatest service to Paul, and Faith, cheerfully risking a musket ball and inspired with a joy of adventure and hunger to save a hunted man, pulled hard where the soldier had pointed. Meantime he turned to his rifle ; but Oxenham was there before him, and picking up the weapon with every evidence of desiring to assist the chase, directed it to sea and fired in a direction where no harm could be done. The irate soldier wasted more precious minutes in protest ; but others had now run from the beach to the furthest points of the rocks, and more than one had obtained a momentary glimpse of the swimmer.

Deschamps was now seventy yards from the shore and practically invisible. Not so the boat, however, and before Sergeant Bulstrode reached the firing party, two men had already discharged their rifles at it. One shot went wide, the other screamed close to Faith Tresilion's ear. But her native blood was up and all the response she made was to back in, where she believed that the fugitive was swimming. As yet he had seen nothing of her ; but now she shouted and bade him shout. More bullets skimmed to right and left ; then she felt a heavy shock all through the boat, but knew not where it was hit. Ashore the lights danced and the guns flashed, while the cliffs shouted back the noise of the explosions. Oxenham, powerless to do more, had prayed the man in command to stop the firing, but Bulstrode was now in surly humour, for he knew that his failure would stand ill for him in the service and a record of great capability be smirched for ever.

In answer to Faith's cry the swimmer had responded, and now both she and the soldiers ashore found their attention turned in the same direction. Paul, however, was invisible, though some fired at random in the direc-

tion where he swam ; while an excited soldier or two, flinging off scarlet jacket, leggings and boots, took to the sea and tried to overtake him.

But he was safe from one peril, though another threatened both him and his rescuer. Faith saw the swimmer at last, and half a dozen strokes brought her boat alongside him. She could not stay to help him in, however, for bullets still spattered the sea to port and starboard of the boat ; but she threw him a rope-end and pulled away from shore as fast as she could. At the same moment she felt a chill flood round her feet and found the bottom of the dinghy awash. The bullet that shook her had got home between wind and water and the sea was coming in fast—where, the rower could not tell.

She cried to Paul, stopped rowing and helped him over the side ; then he set to work to bale as best he might, with a pail that already floated in a foot of water. The dinghy was settling fast when he climbed into her, but his exertions served to prolong her life, though they could not keep her afloat. While he worked, Faith cast about for some means to help him, but there was nothing in the little craft that served the purpose but his pail, and she, guessing that in her turn she would soon be called to swim for it, began to take off her boots and slip out of her heavy woollen petticoat. They were now beyond range of the shore and both shouted as loud as they were able to direct the boat they hoped would be hastening from *The Grey Bird*. But the moments seemed hours, and Paul, already numbed with cold, could no longer fight the steady inrush of the sea. The woman took the bucket therefore and struggled on ; but the water-logged dinghy began to shudder ominously and the water lapped to her gun-wales before any answering shout from the sea cheered their ears.

They were sighted now, and they heard the hum and throb of rowlocks and the swish of oars striking thirty to the minute.

"Row for dear life !" screamed the girl, and then *The Grey Bird* dinghy, with three men in it, came shouldering over the water. The dawn wind had freshened

and clear of the shore a good ripple now ran. It sufficed swiftly to sink the disabled boat, and Faith and Paul Deschamps were actually in the sea when their friends reached them.

Nicholas and Richard Copleston pulled as they had never pulled before and Monk Karswill steered them, swaying forward to the stroke and cheering their exertions. They hurtled over the water and were within twenty feet of the other dinghy when she filled and sank. But the adventure ended with the safety of both the hunted man and his rescuer, for though Deschamps fainted away and was for some time unconscious after being drawn from the water, he recovered before *The Grey Bird* was reached. She indeed had stood in after her boat, and now Abel Hooker, seeing the others returning, brought the lugger up to the wind and waited until the rest returned.

But there came one boat only, not two, and while Honorine embraced her brother and Faith, Nicholas and Karswill considered what had best be done. To take the women to France was impossible and to land them seemed equally dangerous, since Daleham was now aroused by the firing and hummed like a hive of bees. Tresilion proposed that his sister should take the boat and leave them to make their trip to France without it; but she hit on a better plan.

"You can't go without the boat," she said, "and you can't put us ashore, else you'll be stopped yourselves very like. The shore's no place for any of you this morning. But there's another thing you can do with me and Missy."

She pointed where the steady beam of Daleham lighthouse shone unblinking above the Devil's Teeth.

"'Tis quiet to-night and all's still among the rocks," she said. "Sail outside, then drop the boat and put us on the lighthouse. We can hail Uncle Jacob, for I warrant he's up with the light, and we'll go ashore to-morrow."

"There's none like you for thinking of a way out," declared Nicholas. "We'll do it. We'll run away south of the light, then take you through the Throat—the

channel between the two big rocks. 'Tis still enough to make it easy, and uncle will tend to you and get you fire to dry you and food to eat. Your mothers will both be a bit put about I reckon, but that can't be helped. They'll cheer up when they know 'tis all right."

"And the quicker the better," said Karswill.

They got way on their craft, soon stole round the corner of the Devil's Teeth and worked along the seaward side. The waves broke tamely and the swirl about the submerged rocks only served to show their places. But a ring of foam girdled the greater fragments of the ridge and the sigh of the fretted sea rarely died along the chain. A hundred yards from the lighthouse stood the loftiest rock of the range, and between that and the next there opened a channel, known as the Throat. Boats seldom sought it, since a wider and safer way existed between the lighthouse and the main land, but the trawlers would take it without fear in fair weather by day, though at night the more cautious fishermen gave it a wide berth. The Throat was thirty feet across, and on a still night, like the present, this offered no difficulties to an open boat.

Honorine and her friend embarked once more after brother and sister had taken farewell of each other ; and then Paul essayed to speak to Faith also, but could not. He perceived to the full all that she had done for him and in what manner she had repaid him.

"I know and understand," he said. "I cannot speak of it now, but the time will come when you shall learn my response."

"I'm terrible proud to have been a bit of use for once in my life," she answered, "and I've only done for you what you would have done for me."

They pushed off, and in ten minutes, to his exceeding surprise, Jacob Merle, sitting aloft in the lighthouse tower, heard himself hailed and saw a boat floating upon the little rocky inlet beneath. He called his mate and descended, but the boat was already on her way back to *The Grey Bird* before he did so ; and he found the maidens awaiting him at the foot of the lighthouse ladder.

"On a very different day did I last visit you, Mister

Merle," said Honorine. Then they climbed where he had thrown open the lighthouse door and soon were left alone in a little chamber with a fire to dry Faith's garments. Jacob ministered to them presently and gave them the best that the lighthouse contained. Then he heard their story and expressed his satisfaction at the escape.

The Grey Bird was far away under the horizon before dawn came, and when it did, Mr. Merle flew a signal from his little flagstaff as soon as there was light enough for those ashore to see it.

And Robert Pawlet himself was the man to mark it. The flag merely indicated trouble, and guessing that something might be wrong with the keepers, Pawlet turned out at once, hastened down where the long boat of the coastguard lay in her shed, enlisted half a dozen early birds to man her and pulled out as swiftly as he was able.

His astonishment was extreme when the first person to meet him on the little landing-stage proved to be his own sweetheart, for he had not associated her with the riot of the previous night.

Both girls were ashore in twenty minutes and both at home in an hour.

CHAPTER XXI

MR. SIDEBOTTOM IS INSPIRED TO A POEM

SOME weeks after the escape of Paul Deschamps, Mr. Henry Sidebottom donned his three-cornered hat, took his Sunday walking-stick and set off to see a friend. He carried in his pocket the manuscript of his latest poem, and as the matter of it had got abroad, one especially interested had sent him an order to visit her and bring his verses with him. Sidebottom and Emma Tresilion were old acquaintances, and he had known her as a strapping woman who always prided herself on being able to do the work of two men—either afloat or ashore. Now he arrived, and with him he brought a bottle-of old port, his usual gift. The visit had been planned and Mrs. Tresilion was arrayed to do the inn-keeper all honour. She wore her weeds and the cap with streamers ; upon her fingers were her rings ; in her mouth was her pipe.

"Welcome, Henry!" she said. "'Tis always a sight for sore eyes to see your comely mug, my old, piebald pilgrim. And it ain't for that bottle a-bulging out of your bosom that I say it and welcome you. But because we're old friends and can mind the good old days and the good old people. They be very near all gone down to their graves now, except you and me ; but I was cleverer than you, and I've left my pattern behind, whereas you've got no chick to carry on your fine nature."

"You've left your pattern indeed, without a doubt," declared Mr. Sidebottom. "If I'd never known you was a mother, and yet had heard what this fine maiden did in bringing Master Frenchman out of his trouble, I should have sworn to it that she was child of yours."

"That's right—'tis just a thing I'd have took on myself and thought no more about than plucking a spring chicken. But 'twas a very fine bit of work and a very proper subject for your great gift of rhyming. You and me be the only people in Daleham that know the meaning of language. Language is a mere thin trickle of feeble words in the mouths of most men and women—the ignorant toads can't handle it no more than a three-year-old babby can stop a run-away hoss ; but you and me—we get the flavour out of speech and put our meaning that clear and clean that no human's ever left in doubt about it. Of course, when you come to poetry 'tis a higher branch than mine—I grant that."

"You're a poet too," declared Mr. Sidebottom. "I don't say you have my rare gift for rhymes and the putting everyday things into verse, which ain't everyday verse by any means ; but you certainly have got the poetical way with you. You was never heard to say 'yes,' or 'no,' like the common people, but you've got the power of invention to put a bit of life and colour into the most trifling speech. Fetch the corkscrew, Faith, my dear. I want to see your fine mother slip a glass or two of this old and crusted down her throat."

They exchanged further compliments and Mr. Sidebottom was just about to produce his poem when Robert Pawlet arrived full of news. The verses were forgot for a time before great and staggering intelligence from France.

"The world will be up in arms again afore we can look round," he declared. "From Plymouth I've got it to-day—old news now, though such things fly on quick wings. Here's the Congress of the eight great powers sitting at Vienna to make all good and banish war out of Europe, and while they sit cackling, like a lot of barn-yard fowls, Mister Fox slips round the corner and begins to bark ! "

"Not Bonaparte—never ! "

"Bonaparte it is. He's got tired of Elba, as a good few wise men always said he would—and none knew about it better than Master Paul, who found my girl so useful a bit ago. Yes, Bonaparte's back in France.

How he escaped nobody can tell in this country yet ; but he landed at a little fishing-port by the name of Cannes, on the Mediterranean Sea, and set his face for the north. A thousand fighters came with him ; but where that man moves, soldiers spring out of the earth—the very stones and blades of grass turn to soldiers."

"A proper Mars for certain," declared Mr. Sidebottom. "Mars be the god of war, Pawlet, and you may say Boney's a god, for the folk treat him like one."

"God or devil, he'll be at the throat of Europe again in a month or two. They flock to him, and by the time he gets to Paris, France will be his. The Congress have called him a violator of the common peace and a good few other hard names ; but you can't fight Bonaparte with words, and King Louis will soon run out of Paris with his tail between his legs."

"What will come of it ?" asked Mr. Sidebottom. "I'm no politician, but I hope we shan't be drawn in."

"I hope we shall," said Emma Tresilion, "and I know we shall. 'Twill take Wellington to trample on that over-blown frog and pop him. There's not another living man, now my saint is dead and gone, for he could have done it with his rare wit for battle—not a living man I say, but the Duke. They'll run to him to help 'em, and he will help 'em. You mark me, afore we're any of us much nearer the Happy Land, there'll be a proper volcano blow-up over the water and thousands will die, and England will come out top, according to custom, and that pot-bellied, Corsican whipper-snapper will be mopped up and wiped out of Europe, never to trouble it no more."

Thus did Mother Tresilion foretell Waterloo. But her listeners were not so positive.

"'Tis easy to talk," declared Pawlet, "but he's a mighty man—quite as great as the Duke in war, as the past has shown. He may have Europe under his heel yet ; and little mercy he'll show if that happens. And then he'd pluck a crow with us and pay off long scores."

"To see him face to face would be great matter for poetry," declared Mr. Sidebottom.

"I wish I could," said Emma. "I wish I could have

the Jack-o'-lantern at my bed-foot for half an hour or so. He should hear the truth about his hard-hearted, selfish, lying, blackguard ways—always playing for his own hand and not caring a tinker's soldering-iron how many million men, as good as himself and better, he sends to cruel death, so long as they die for him. Who the law and the prophets wants to die for a grasping, false, mean little devil like Boney? Frenchmen be born fools to fling away their all for such a hateful, over-bearing, blustering imp; and I'd tell 'em so to their silly black faces."

They talked awhile longer, finished Mr. Sidebottom's port and listened while the old woman settled the future of Europe. Then she was reminded by the mention of Paul Deschamps that her friend had come to read his poem inspired by Faith's great adventure.

"Let Boney be forgot for a bit, though the long-armed octopus takes good care not to be forgot for long," she said. "There's other things besides him and his vagaries; and Henry Sidebottom's poetry be one of them. So let's hear what you've set down, my Dutch tulip; and 'tis very fitting that this chap should hear it also; for nobody sets more store on my Faith than her future husband, and nobody made more stir than him when he heard what she'd been up to."

"And well I might," declared Pawlet; "and as for the verses, I've heard 'em already at *The Sailors' Joy*, and very fine they are."

"It seems a small thing after this great news you bring, exciseman; but the brave deed weren't a small thing by any means," said the inn-keeper.

Then he produced a paper and read his version of Faith's achievement.

"THE BRAVE MAIDEN

"I sing the song of a maiden brave—
Cheerily, boys, yo ho!
Who came, like a merrymaid, out of a wave
A lad of high degree to save
From a dreadful fate or a watery grave—
Cheerily, boys, yo ho!"

- " The bullets flew and the muskets roared—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
 But the maiden, she gathered the lad aboard,
 Unhurt by the mercy of the watching Lord,
 Though a hail of lead around them poured—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
- " The muskets roared and the bullets flew—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
 And now they were fret by a peril new,
 For the poor little dinghy was shot right through,
 And she filled and she sank—I tell you true—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
- " But there sped o'er the rolling waves a boat—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
 And swiftly her oars the ocean smote
 While Nick, he roared from his sea-dog throat,
 To hearten the swimmers and keep 'em afloat—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
- " 'Twas a terrible sell for Davy Jones—
 !Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
 For dearly he wanted that maiden's bones
 And the music fine of her shrieks and moans
 When the cruel dark waters had drowned her groans—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
- " But glory be ! they are safe and sound—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
 Without a single scratch or wound ;
 So back to *The Grey Bird* the boat doth bound,
 And the poor young man hath salvation found—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
- " Then three times three to her deathless fame !
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
 For there's only her mother had done the same,
 So strong and so fearless, so clever, so game,
 And Faith Tresilion's her beautiful name—
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho !
 Cheerily, boys, yo ho ! "

" Sing it," said Mother Tresilion. " 'Tis a brave song, but nothing in your poor little bleat, Henry. Hand it over to Robin and he'll sing it. Give tongue, Bobby ; bellow so loud that you'll shake the fleas out of my feather bolster. You've done terrible clever, inn-keeper —a very good ballet, though not too fine for the occasion."

Mr. Pawlet invented a tune as he proceeded, and obeyed his future mother-in-law, while she, in her gruff man's voice, bawled the chorus. It was an exhilarating entertainment and left the old woman very exhausted but well pleased with herself.

"We must have that every night," she said. "Get the hollands, Faith. Us'll drink to Henry's health. He's a great man."

The air grew thick at Mrs. Tresilion's reception, for she puffed her pipe and both the men drew at "churchwardens." Faith went to the door presently, to let Pawlet out, and as she did so, the spectacle of a strange vessel in the bay arrested her attention. She called her lover's notice to the craft and he was able to describe her.

"A French boat," he said, "one of they three-masted luggers from the western ports. A fisherman. You can see 'em often at Plymouth. No doubt she's on her way there, but have run into Daleham for some reason. I must board her."

He hastened to the harbour, but other eyes had also seen the craft and one pair recognized her.

When Paul evaded capture, Lieutenant Warner Baldwin had hugged his disappointment to his bosom and concealed it as carefully as he was able. The exact state of the case had, of course, been hidden from the shore, but when Honорine returned to her distracted mother on the following day, she was able to report her brother safe, and those chiefly interested were relieved to know the sequel. Warner professed satisfaction with the rest and Doctor Baldwin preached him a sermon on the subject—to prove that Providence had not smiled upon the contemplated duel between blood relations and had taken these strong means to prevent its operation. The young man was now concerned about his own affairs, for war threatened ominously and he little desired to be seen under arms again. His rancour was not cooled and he stood in two minds what to be at. He had, however, for the moment forgotten Paul Deschamps before the problems which would soon cry for solution in his own life; but now, on this

March afternoon, a familiar object arrested his sight and brought his enemy back to his recollection.

The Havre lugger, that he had seen at Plymouth, lay in the bay, and Baldwin doubted not that she came about the business of Deschamps. He set off to the harbour therefore and arrived there not long after Pawlet and the coastguards had put out to inspect the stranger. Guessing that there might be communications from Paul for his mother or sister, Warner waited at the quay until the exciseman returned ; and with him loitered Elijah Newte, who had come down to the village for his master and been drawn to the quay by the sudden appearance of the familiar foreigner.

He spoke to Baldwin now in somewhat surly fashion, for the escape of Deschamps had been a sore blow to Elijah. He had built hope of rare rewards on the capture of the Frenchman and resented the failure of the enterprise.

" Think not I am better pleased than yourself," Warner answered to his protests. " We did what we could, but he had too many friends."

And now Newte, also seeing the boat from Havre, was interested. He felt a sort of power over Baldwin, though he could not proclaim the lieutenant without disgracing himself ; but he had not quarrelled with Baldwin, since nothing could be gained by so doing, and he still hoped if possible to win further advantage from him.

" If there are letters I shall hear the contents of them, and if there are letters for him, I shall doubtless be able to get possession of them," he told Newte, while they waited for Robert Pawlet's return ; " but *The Grey Bird* must have reached France long before this vessel sailed, and I rather expect to find that she brings letters for the man's relations. He will now join Napoleon and we may hope meet his death once for all under that arch-traitor."

Thus he spoke without a guard on his lips and the other grinned.

" A pity the chap I hate ain't going with him," he said. " 'Tis contrary to reason that such a man as

Nicholas Tresilion should die in his bed ; but he won't fall in honest war. He'll get his head broken some fine night, and I'd like to think that I, or yonder man, coming ashore in thicky boat, would be the one to do it."

He pointed where Pawlet returned to harbour from his visit to the Frenchman. The trawler had evidently completed her business at Daleham, for she was already under way and heading to sea again before the long boat of the Customs arrived at the quay steps.

Pawlet appeared and a few loafers crowded round him, including Newte, but the exciseman had kept a close eye on the gigantic sailor since their first unpleasant meeting, and though Elijah had taken occasion to apologise very humbly for the blow that had knocked Robert senseless, his victim knew more about him than he guessed, and was not quick to offer friendship.

Now, however, Warner Baldwin came forward, and since Pawlet was ignorant of his character, but only knew him for a kinsman of Paul Deschamps, he saluted the lieutenant and engaged him in conversation.

"This is a matter I can hand over to your honour," he said. "Yonder's a little fishing-lugger out of Havre, and she's here on a special mission from France. I boarded her and had a look round, but she's empty. She only brings this packet-for Madame Deschamps. 'Tis private from her son and very important. More they didn't know. They were in a great hurry to be gone out of English waters, because war is to be on us again afore we can count a dozen. I'll ask you to hand this to the lady. The matter concerns none else."

Warner thanked him and undertook to do as he was directed. He left the quay almost directly and started for "Four Oaks," but it was some time later in the day before he appeared there. Then he attended his aunt, produced the letter and explained how it arrived. Madame Deschamps received it with some emotion and retired to read it in secret, while her nephew spoke with Honorine.

She asked him pointedly whether the sudden cloud in European affairs would take him back to his regiment, but he declared it to be impossible at present.

"There are many reasons why I cannot go just now," he answered, "and first my health. I make as light of it as possible, but I am in some fear for myself. Moreover one has to think of one's kindred. I feel that while you and my aunt are alone, I cannot well desert you; and Uncle Upcott also makes me anxious sometimes, for he is not growing younger and his infirmities increase."

"I knew not that he had any," said the girl. "Gout indeed always overtakes him in the spring, and he suffers dreadfully; but when he has conquered it, he is soon himself again, and I think it must be true, what he says, that gout keeps off other ailments."

"He is not so strong as he would have us believe," answered her cousin. "When first I came here, I was quickly aware that he did not like me, or value my company. We Baldwins are sensitive, and I soon perceived that I was antipathetic and regretted the fact. But I venture to think that on better acquaintance the good man has come to feel more kindly. At any rate I have done my best to win his esteem. And I hope that Paul, too, will be my friend some day and perceive that he has wronged me in the past. I made every allowance for a man smarting under personal tribulations and great sorrows, but it was monstrous to drag me in as he chose to do."

"I know nothing of your quarrel," she answered, "and do not wish to. But of one thing you may be sure; he would not have denied you your satisfaction under any lesser danger than that that threatened him. And when he comes home again, he will be the first to recognize the obligation under which he stands."

"At least he will remember that I hastened to bring him the news of the soldiers. He can hardly continue to think ill of the man who saved him," answered Baldwin.

But this the other was not prepared to grant.

"It was Gilbert Oxenham who saved him, and Faith Tresilion, and I," she said. "You did not wet your boots or quicken your pulse for him. You stopped here and preached to mother."

She was uncompromising and, hating her very heartily under his humble manner, Warner now turned to his aunt who rejoined them.

She brought the last news to be expected, and she did not pretend to conceal her uneasiness at it.

"I can make nothing of it," she said. "His letter is of the briefest and tells me little save that he is returning immediately from France. The reason for such an extraordinary action is hidden. Hardly is he on French soil when he decides to return and face the great peril awaiting him in this country. But read it—read it."

She handed the letter to Honorine, who glanced through it swiftly.

"On Tuesday night, the twentieth of March, he returns in *The Grey Bird*," she said. "And by night he will come, so that we may communicate with him before he lands, and warn him if any dangers still exist. There is a great mystery here, for this, of all others, is the moment when his heart and soul would be in France. The Emperor's escape was doubtless known there long before it reached us here to-day. And what is Paul doing on his way home when France is flocking to the standards of Napoleon?"

"That is what I ask myself," answered her mother. "And that is why I think some strange and unexpected event must have befallen to send him back at such a moment. I cannot pretend to guess what it may be, but nothing other than some supreme misfortune, or else some fear for his mother and sister, would bring him back to us just now. The fate of France is in the balance once more and Bonaparte has clearly come to the last throw of the dice. At such a moment it is almost impossible to conceive of any power strong enough to draw Paul out of France."

"He is coming, however, and on the night of the twentieth of March," said Warner Baldwin. "We must prepare for him and hope that the explanation of his extraordinary conduct will not reveal any further misfortunes for my unhappy cousin."

He left them soon afterwards, and Honorine sought to

comfort and cheer her mother ; but Madame Deschamps would not be comforted.

"There is evil behind this," she declared. "If there were not, Paul would tell us more. It is only to lessen our anxiety and tribulation that he says so little. But a mother is not deceived. Harm has befallen him."

CHAPTER XXII

THREE KNAVES

WARNER BALDWIN having discussed the matter of Paul's letter with his uncle and played their regular evening game of chess, set forth and sought the society into which he had sunk of late. To the coffin-maker's he went, and since he was now on terms of intimacy with Abednego Egg and his man, he did not hesitate to explain to them that Paul Deschamps was returning.

"But for my part," he said, "I bear the rascal a greater grudge than ever. He tricked me before, thanks to his friends, but he shall not again. *The Grey Bird* comes in after dark on the night of March the twentieth, and it is evidently proposed to get him ashore before morning, that he may cheat justice again, but the rogue shall not do so. I go to Plymouth to-morrow with this information."

Elijah spat into the fire.

"I wish we could lay hands on everybody aboard the cussed boat," he said. "If you've got an enemy on her, so have I, and Nicholas Tresilion's his name."

"'Tis a feeble generation," declared Mr. Egg, "and old though I am, I say so. A knock-kneed race and this young Tresilion not worthy to be called his father's son. He's given up smuggling by the look of it, and let a fine business go to the dogs. Now John Tresilion was a man, and much good money I got by him; but since he's dropped, there's not a keg of spirits come into Daleham. And to think what I can call to mind! 'Tis as if all the manhood had been lost out of man, let alone all the devil. For smuggling you want pluck and nerve; but for wrecking, you wanted

devil as well, and a good spice of it too. But, thank God, I never lacked it. I've done things that would turn grey the hair of this slack-twisted generation. And I'd do 'em again ! 'Crime' they call it. Bah ! What's crime but taking steps that's contrary to public opinion ? War against a nation ban't a crime, then why should war against a fishing-boat be a crime ? If I was a young man and had a grudge against them in *The Grey Bird*, I shouldn't run whining to the soldiers, like you, nor yet sit and grumble by the fire, like Newte ; I'd wait and see if the weather was my side and take my luck and do my wickedest that she should never come to port at all ! ”

They stared at him, but unabashed he continued.

“ ‘Tis no good living in Cornwall if you don't larn what Cornwall can teach ; and I got a useful bit of knowledge when I was on the north coast at Trebarwith, nigh the old castle of Tintagel. A ship would often come ashore there—none could ever tell how. You'd see all sorts of lights in the darkness there. Why, we'd go rabbiting there with lights ! We didn't use ferrets : we used crabs. Just a good lively shell-back with half an inch of candle-end on him. Then we'd light up after dark and put him down a rabbit-hole and the creatures under the earth would think 'twas the devil and all his demons coming when they see Master Crab bearing down with the candle-end on his back ! And out they'd pop for dear life—into the nets we'd got spread for 'em. But that was pleasure. There was nights when we went to business too, and I've often thought, looking round this place, what a paradise it would have been for the sportsmen of the olden time. That's before the light-house came. But even now, if there was men here with the right stuff in 'em, we might—— But I talk to deaf ears, for no doubt to wreck a fishing-boat full of silly cowards would be beyond your power or pluck.”

Newte spoke.

“ Not beyond mine. If I knew how it could be done, I'd do it and glad to do it.”

“ ‘Tis strange,” continued “ Bad ” Egg, “ that *The Grey Bird*'s to be home the twentieth of March ; because

there's another craft due at the same time—I mean that little coaster that runs between here and Wales with timber. *The Country Lass* she's called, and I've got my knife into the master, and if I could count upon a bit of help from trustworthy men, I'd have her on the rocks that night so sure as I make coffins. There's only one thing wanting for a dead certainty, because we know the time and the place. All else that matters is the weather. If 'tis fair and calm, then, with the best will in the world, we can't hurt a cockleshell ; but if the devil sent half a gale of wind, then we could very easily scat up any boats making Daleham that night."

"There's the lighthouse," said Warner.

"Yes, there's the lighthouse ; and that's where an old man like me would want a bit of help. We know all about the lighthouse and we know that on a smooth night it could be reached by boat from Daleham in half an hour."

"You could easily get across from Daleham Head, however," declared Newte. "The channel's not a mile wide."

"Right," answered Egg. "A brace of stout lads could cross early afore dusk and do the needful. Then—always counting on foul weather—your light's out for the night, and who's going to stop me, or any other understanding man, from lighting another light under Daleham Head ? A steady white light 'twould be, and then any floating stuff trying to make Daleham picks up my light and thinks that all's well. They take it for the lighthouse and—they're doomed, for what they see is a light under Daleham Head, not a light on the Devil's Teeth ; and if they steer for the Channel on the west they run on to Daleham Head itself, and if they go east to round the Devil's Teeth, they find themselves upon 'em. Nothing could fit in better for the old game, and the only risk is the lighthouse ; but the old sort of men would have took that risk and thought nothing of it."

"And so would I," declared Newte, "and so would this chap here. Him and me be giants both and as strong as lions, and if us couldn't pop a boat across from

the Head and take measures to keep the light out some fine night——”

Abednego interrupted him.

“ ‘Tis just the fine nights that’s no good,” he said. “ The weather’s master, and unless the weather helps us and blows up foul, we should have only our trouble for our pains. Wrecking’s a foul weather game.”

They talked on and, for various motives, both his hearers were convinced by the elder scoundrel that what he contemplated was quite practicable.

“ Given the right weather and all else is as simple as catching shrimps,” he assured them. “ And you never know what fish will come to your net with a false light in rough weather. There’s two we can count on to come to ours, if the night brings in a blow and there’s a sea running; but more may be drawn in. All we want is a thick night and a false light a mile west of the light-house. Nature will do the rest.”

He turned to Warner Baldwin.

“ You wouldn’t need no soldiers for Master Deschamps then. The Devil’s Teeth would chew him up to powder and *The Grey Bird* too.”

The motiveless malignity of this ancient wretch struck his educated listener.

“ And what do you get out of it?” he asked.

“ My share,” answered Egg. “ First there’s the pleasure of it—the pleasure of reviving an old custom from the past. And then there’s the pleasure of drowning *The Country Lass* and her damned master. And if she comes ashore, her cargo, being timber, will come ashore too, and I shall get a bit of useful stuff and a bit of useful work; for where there’s wrecks, there’s dead men, and where there’s dead men, there’s a job for me. Wrecking be sure to pay a coffin builder everyway.”

“ You bad old devil!” said Elijah. But Mr. Egg only laughed.

“ Every man have got to die soon or late,” he said, “ and not you, nor yet me can shorten their lives by an hour, for all happens according as the Almighty has set down from the beginning. Nothing falls out without He chooses it, and so if I’m a wrecker, ‘tis

because 'twas the Almighty and Everlasting plan about me that I should be. Now drink up and we'll go out on Daleham Head and I'll show you how things would happen if the lighthouse were a dark house for once in a way and the light burned in a little cubby hole I know about on the cliffs. It looks out to sea and can't be viewed from shore."

Filled with awakened energy at the thought of his ancient pursuit, the old man dragged them forth presently. They climbed to the Head, studied the lighthouse, which cast its tranquil and steady beam across a still night, and then, pursuing a cliff track to sea level, arrived at a little plateau standing sixty feet above the sea at about the level of the lighthouse lantern.

"A light here would be seen from the lighthouse," said Warner Baldwin, and Mr. Egg admitted as much.

"No matter for that. The two men on the lighthouse would be hard and fast, and if they'd been put in a fix where they couldn't light their own light, 'tis very certain they'd be powerless to protest or call attention to ours. They wouldn't be free men till the next day came. And, as for the other eyes that see my light, 'tis the last they ever will see this side of their graves. But I tell you again everything depends on the weather. You want that to fall out just so, and if it don't—if the most needful thing ain't there—then all else is idle and only running ourselves into danger to risk it."

They discussed every detail of the proposed villainy and Baldwin was the last to be convinced. But since the day alone could decide their action, and he determined to leave nothing to chance respecting the reception of his cousin, he entered upon a private undertaking independent of Egg or Newte. To destroy Deschamps was a possibility agreeable enough; but given a fair night, the old wrecker's infamy must be futile, and that would mean *The Grey Bird* safely in harbour on the morning following her arrival.

He decided therefore to take his news to Plymouth and communicate it to the garrison. Sergeant Bulstrode had returned to quarters smarting very bitterly under his defeat, and it looked unlikely that with sufficient pre-

cautions by land and sea he would be frustrated a second time.

It was now deliberately agreed by the three scoundrels that an effort should be made to destroy shipping on the night in question, if the weather justified it ; and then the younger men listened to the part they were expected to play. Egg himself was prepared to see after the false light, but before they left the Head he took them to the base of the cliffs at the nearest point of approach to the lighthouse.

"'Tis here you've got to be," he said, "and your work must be done long afore dark."

They parted an hour later and Baldwin returned well pleased to the vicarage. Whatever might be the reason for Paul's home-coming it seemed pretty certain that he was doomed. In the one case he might actually die ; and if he came safely ashore, there would be those ready to meet him at his arrival. Of this Warner was determined ; and the next day, armed with his news, he travelled to Plymouth and laid the information at the Citadel.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE OLD HUNDREDTH

SO many divers interests clashed and bore upon each other during the memorable evening and night which were to see *The Grey Bird* return to her home port, that it is not easy to present them in the surest and most succinct sequence.

We may, however, open the narration at the bedside of Emma Tresilion, who was entertaining a rare visitor.

The man-of-war's boatswain, Peter Merle, came very occasionally to see his relatives at Daleham, and now he was here unexpectedly, to visit Jacob at the light-house and his aunt ashore.

"I'm out of luck," he said, "for I hear Nick's in France, and so might Uncle Jacob be for all I shall see of him. There's a stiff breeze granted, but I'd pull myself out to him if I could get one of your long-shore loafers to help me. However they won't go out as the glass is falling; so you'll have to give uncle my respects and tell him that I've been to Daleham and meant to visit him, but was prevented doing so."

Peter, a powerful, handsome man of five and thirty, was dear to his aunt, in that he had always regarded the dead and gone John Tresilion as a hero, and never hesitated to support him in his doubtful business.

"I've come," he said, "because I shan't get the chance again for a month of Sundays—perhaps never, for you can't tell how 'twill go when there's fighting at sea. Here's Boney broke his chain and Europe shaking in its shoes and, like everybody else, we're busy. The *Leviathan* goes to sea in a month, or less if we can make ready."

"When rogues fall out, honest men come by their

deserts," said his aunt. "And if there's going to be fighting and raging and fury between England and France, then my Nicholas will be able to go about his business without any trouble over there. As for this side, as you know, my Faith have taken the Daleham gauger for her lord and master, and so all's said!"

He laughed and loaded his aunt's pipe with black tobacco.

"That'll lift the roof off your mouth, my old dear," he said. "But we all know you can stand fire."

"Aye, and was fire-proof afore your bullet head came into the world, my fine son of a gun," she answered.

"I always thought a terrible lot of you and Uncle John," he declared. "'Tis a great and cruel loss not to see him alongside of you with his mighty laugh, and his left eyelid lifting, and his terrible fine stories. 'Twas the cleverness of the man to make the world his friend, and everybody, as I've heard tell about, was his friend, but him that was his death."

"The largest-hearted creature that ever made his living out of run goods," said Emma frankly; "and I thank the watchful Lord that my Nick be growing up just such another. He ain't such a religious and God-fearing man as his father, and he haven't got John's perfect trust in himself; but he's young yet. These virtues will come, for I'm still here to train him in the way he should go."

"A smuggler's calling don't ask for much religion I reckon," declared Peter; but his aunt convinced him that he was wrong.

"Nobody wants religion more," she said, "for if in the midst of life you are in death, as every smuggler must be, then 'tis a very needful thing that he lives in peace with heaven, though he may live at war with the Customs. What my John used to ask, and no man ever yet could answer him, was this, 'Why should the King be made to tax good liquor?' Nobody's ever found an answer to that question and nobody ever will, and what I say is, the King never would do it, if he was let alone as a King ought to be. But for my part, I don't believe the royal man ever hears about such goings on,

and I'm sure he don't get a penny from it, and I'll swear he never smells such proper tipple as I drink every day of my life."

Her nephew agreed with these sentiments ; then came Faith from the village, and Peter kissed her and congratulated her on her betrothal.

"I often wondered who'd have the taming of you," he said, "but never in my wildest moments did I count upon an exciseman."

"No more did I," she answered, "but no witty maiden could let such a fine chap pass. I wouldn't part with my Robert for his weight in gold!"

Mrs. Tresilion told the great story of Faith's adventure, and that reminded her daughter of an event in the immediate future.

"There'll be more adventures soon by the look of it," she said, "for Nick's due home to-night and the young gentleman's coming with him. That's a proper mystery, for everybody thought that, being a soldier to the marrow in his bones, the war would soon keep him quiet ; but, instead, now we hear he's bolting home again, and nobody can guess why, least of all his own people."

"Speaking of soldiers," answered Peter Merle, "there's soldiers on the road to-day. I don't say they're bound for Daleham ; but if they are, it's very certain Sergeant Bulstrode won't let the Frenchman give 'em the slip a second time."

"But how do they know ?" asked Faith. "Who can have told them ? Not a dozen—not half a dozen people in Daleham do know Master Paul's coming back."

"He's got enemies no doubt," said the sailor. "A Frenchy can't go very far in England without finding himself up against them that hate him."

A sudden blast of wind shook the window and made him look out.

"Master Nick will get a dusting by the look of it," declared Merle. "It's going to blow."

"He's off the land now no doubt waiting for dark," answered Faith, "and glad to be alongside his port. I reckon we ought to go and lie by the anchorage for him. For if the sojers know he's coming, they'll know the

time too. There's a traitor somewhere, and 'tis none too soon for him to be ferreted out."

" You won't go and lie by the moorings to-night," said Peter. " And more won't the soldiers neither. For why? I smell a whole gale afore morning. So I told your wise-acres in harbour and they agreed."

Robert Pawlet entered at this moment. He came out of the gathering dusk and was evidently perturbed. Indeed he almost forgot his manners, for when presented to Peter Merle, he gave him but the briefest salutation and no thanks for his congratulations.

" Excuse me," he said, " but have you heard from your Uncle Jacob to-day, Faith ? "

" Not I," she answered.

" For his sake in part I came," declared Peter. " I'm very fond of the old dear and like to see him when I can. A wiser man don't live, nor yet a better. But I couldn't get to the lighthouse at noon. 'Twas too rough."

" Somebody have got to go to-night, however," answered Pawlet shortly, " and I'm the man."

" Why? " cried Emma Tresilion. " Stars and snakes! What be you talking about, Robin? Has anything happened to my brother? "

" You can't go, Robert," added Faith. " And you shan't."

" Go I must and quickly too," he answered. " The light's not burning! "

This announcement created immense excitement, as well it might. Emma heaved her bulk across her bed to look out of a little window from which the lighthouse might be seen, and Faith and her cousin hastened to the door and descended to the beach. It was now dusk and the strong wind shouted over the sea from a dark sky. Daylight fast perished and across the darkling bay ran faint foam ridges, just visible, that streaked the gloom with ghostly white. A loud wind shouted and the bent grass at the beach edge leapt and struggled against it, while the sand, caught in little eddies, rose and stung their faces. Already the village showed a golden spatter of lights in the shop windows, but the lighthouse was invisible. Only in a lull of the gathering

wind came the roar of distant billows driven by the south-wester to break along the Devil's Teeth. From shore the rocky ridge might no longer be distinguished, but the sound of it broke like intermittent thunder on the ears of those that listened. As yet no rain fell, and along the darkness of the land the angry sky had blown clear for a little space. But the edge of the western horizon soon vanished and the clouds shut down like an eyelid, leaving all dark. There was a gathering sting in the wind that told both Merle and Pawlet that the heart of the storm had yet to come. Daleham indeed was aware of the fact long ago, and such boats as rode at their outer berths were brought in and made safe within the arms of the harbour; but few craft were at home, for the larger part of the fleet was down off the Scillies to meet the mackerel. A few fishers were due to-night.

Time began to be precious, and Pawlet, with Merle and Faith, hastened to the port. They formed but a small porportion of those who already tended that way, for old men and young men, women and children were drawn—not by the March gale, for that was a phenomenon common enough—but by an unparalleled circumstance: the horror of darkness where the lighthouse stood.

Many men had congregated at the pier head and their numbers increased, while anxious women moved about among them, asking questions and receiving no replies.

Doctor Baldwin and Honorine were on the quay, for after hearing that Daleham light was out, he had hastened to the harbour.

It transpired that not only *The Grey Bird* was due, but *The Country Lass*, a timber trader from round the Land's End; and a few of the trawlers were also expected.

"Is it too late, or is it not too late?" asked the vicar of the harbour master, an old grizzled man.

"Too late to go to the light, your reverence. I know of none who'd ship to-night," he answered.

"You can't ask any to risk his life."

"Volunteers then! Volunteers for the lighthouse!"

cried Doctor Baldwin, but the fishermen shook their heads. Then a louder voice called them cowards, and Gilbert Oxenham, who stood with Honoreine, challenged three others to join him.

"'Tis only half a gale yet," he said, "and there are a dozen stout boats in harbour would laugh at the sea."

"Laugh bottom up," answered a sailor. "If you want to drown, young master, you'll do it alone. No sane man would try to make the lighthouse, and no boat in Daleham would live for five minutes once you were outside the harbour heads. You don't know—we do."

A dozen soldiers, off duty till dawn, now swelled this throng, and Oxenham made appeal to them; but they were landsmen and could not help him. Sergeant Bulstrode was among them and recognized his former acquaintance.

"Truly your friend's star is always setting," he said. "They carry a Jonah in that boat, but I hope he ain't bound for the belly of the whale to-night. Though it looks terrible like it."

Then came Pawlet and Faith Tresilion and her cousin. There followed them others of the coastguard; while Sir Simeon Glanvil and his daughters also arrived at the pier head; and from the valley came Henry Sidebottom, Ned Cawdle of Appleby Farm, Tom Otter and others.

Pawlet, whose duty it was to get to the lighthouse if power of man could accomplish the feat, now cried in his turn for volunteers.

"I'm going," he said, "in the Customs second boat, for she's got as good a chance as anything, and no man's called upon to come; but I can't go alone, and therefore in the name of those afloat to-night and those on the lighthouse too, for some great evil's fallen upon 'em—in the name of our fellow-men, I call on those that can to help me!"

Oxenham came to his side instantly.

"I'm with you, exciseman," he said. "Where's the boat?"

But others had already been busy with her. She

rocked at the harbour steps—a strong bluff-bowed tub with generous beam.

"And I'll come," said Peter Merle. "'Tis my duty for a relation, just as much as 'tis yours for the State. For two relations you may say—because my uncle's aboard the lighthouse and my cousin aboard *The Grey Bird*."

The people cheered and swift farewells were spoken, for Pawlet cried out to waste no time.

"A steersman is all we want," he bawled; "there's three men ready to do their duty, surely to God among a hundred of you one will come to the tiller?"

He appealed to the coastguards, but they would not come. Most of them were married men with children and felt that by no right could they be commanded where the chances of death were so grave. Pawlet cursed, for every moment weakened his hope. And then, before any could stop her, his sweetheart was down over the steps and in the boat.

"Shove off!" she cried. "'Tis no good you bidding be out, Bob, for I'm here, and I've got the lines, and I'll steer far better than those lubbers aloft there—you know that. 'Tis for my own I'm doing it, and you'll have a better chance for your life with me here than you would have with another. And if we lose, we lose together. I won't keep alive after to-night if you don't."

He saw that she was not to be denied, cried out the wonder of her, set his teeth and went to his oar. Each man had two short, stout sculls. Pawlet pulled stroke, then came Oxenham, the heaviest of the three and Peter Merle was bow.

A cheer louder than the wind, yet swiftly caught and whirled away by it, saluted the boat as she started upon her struggle for life or death; and the thunder of that shout, blown thin, swept shoreward and fell on the ears of two mothers where they watched and wondered in trouble and amazement. At "Four Oaks," on the cliffs, Madam Deschamps walked restlessly and waited for her daughter's return, while from the little window beside her bed, Emma Tresilion's paeony

face looked out upon the night and her lips uttered words that it was well the storm swept swiftly to oblivion unheard.

Meantime a strange silence fell on the crowd watching along the pier. Little enough could be seen, for the boat was scarcely visible in the darkening welter of waters ; but they waited and strained their eyes upon the ashy foam ridges, and many a man threw off his coat or jacket in readiness to fight the waves if any cry told of the boat's immediate destruction. They had seen her go between the harbour heads and watched her nose strike the first billow. She had risen to it like a rearing steed, until half her length was clear of the sea and the bow oar was nearly thrown on the back of his neighbour ; but that first fearful impact was not again repeated in the sight of the watchers, and a great sob of thankfulness ran along the crowd of men and women as she came down on an even keel and forged ahead. Her progress was slow enough, for it was necessary to keep her head straight at the seas, and time and again the labour of five minutes seemed lost as the little craft was driven back helpless on the back of a great roller ; but the men who rowed were probably the pick of all that might have been chosen from Daleham for the task that night. They were in their prime, clean-living, courageous, unusually powerful ; and they were out for the battle of their lives with the inspiration and aid of a woman at the helm. For that meant something to them—a psychological incitement—a loadstone of might ; while for one—Robert Pawlet—his life was embarked with him, and no stimulus had been more terrific than that of the figure who sat with her feet close to his feet, her steady eyes looking ahead over his shoulder, her hair blowing behind her, but cleared off her face by the white handkerchief wrapped round her brow.

Into the night and storm they struggled, and ashore none now knew whether they were afloat or not. But once clear of the harbour, it would be possible, through part of their journey, to cheat the worst of the weather and hug the shore until nearer Daleham Head. Such a

course, however, must increase the peril of the last stages of the journey, for then they would have to row in a measure across the seas, and those wise in the matter held that Pawlet would hold a direct course, which must take longer, but gave the boat a better chance of attaining her goal. Even if she reached the lighthouse, to get into it would be no easy matter, and few deemed the chances of entering the little inlet beneath the tower were worth weighing. They whispered together, shook their heads and held that good lives had been deliberately thrown away.

Time only could decide the issue, and now Doctor Baldwin, deeming it an hour for intercession, lifted his voice among them and called the people to their knees.

"If ever sinful men should lift their voices to the Throne it is now!" he said. "Down, all that worship the Almighty God, while I pray for the boat and those brave and devoted spirits therein."

It seemed that his demand found the folk willing enough, for in the intolerable strain of those moments any outlet for emotion was welcomed. They could do nothing but watch and pray; and prayer offered an outlet of energy, for while but one man lifted the petition, all could follow it. Conscious presently that familiar words uttered in unison were a mighty relief to tortured hearts, the old man led them to sing to their Maker, when his own prayer was made.

He knelt with Honorine's hand in his; and beside him Sir Simeon Glanvil and his daughters sank to their knees, with Sidebottom, Otter and the crowd round about.

Then he lifted his voice and called for mercy.

"O Everlasting God, Who holdest the tempest in the hollow of Thine Hand and can at a word bid peace to brood upon these waters—O Thou, Who knowest every billow of the ocean and dost mark its place and rule its furrow upon the sea, have pity, we beseech Thee, on these men and this woman, and guide them, of Thine infinite mercy, between the destroying mountains of the deep, so that they may thread the antres of the storm and, safe in their God's strong hand, may complete their

blessed journey of salvation. Steer their little boat, we beseech Thee, Heavenly Father and God of Love, and speak to the ocean, so that she hears her Maker's voice and suffer man's heroism for man to win the victory. Hear Thy people, O Merciful One, for no tempest can drown the cry of them who call upon their God ; give heed to the prayer of Thy humble creatures, sunk here upon the earth at Thy footstool, and shed the light of Thy Countenance upon them, even as they would fling a light to illuminate the perilous places of the deep. Hear us, we beseech Thee, O God, and grant the petition of Thy people ! ”

They cried “Amen,” each man and woman loosing a mighty weight of feeling from their bosoms with the word. Then their vicar, still bareheaded, with his white locks fluttering like a foam halo about his poll, bade them rise to their feet and sing.

They did so and relieved their pent-up hearts. Then the time began to lengthen and some despaired, while others held it impossible yet to be sure. A full hour some said must yet elapse before all hope was dead, while others believed it vain to delay longer. Heavy rain began to fall and many slunk away ; but the greater number, pinning their faith to Doctor Baldwin, even as he pinned his to his Creator, held on and knelt while he prayed yet again. Among them were the soldiers and Sergeant Bulstrode, for the sergeant was a pious man and had never been witness of such a spectacle as this until now, or seen men and women fight a tempest with prayer.

Another fervent petition did the vicar lift and then came the end—a scene impossible to set down in words. He bade them sing the Old Hundredth, and the majestic poem rose upon the storm, lifted from three hundred throats. But before they had finished, suddenly, gloriously from the sea there flashed a light, clear, serene and radiant. Its mighty beam shone steady across the storm and the familiar illumination seemed to have wakened from the midst of the darkness in answer to that mighty song. Its significance came with a splendour brighter than the light itself to the watchers ;

for surely it must mean that the boat had won her battle against the awful odds ; that those who had offered their lives to save other lives were themselves in safety.

Cries and sobs of rejoicing broke from the people. Men shook each other's hands ; women kissed and mingled their tears.

Sir Simeon embraced the doctor, but was too moved to speak.

"Thank God, thank God, Who hath given us the victory," cried the vicar.

And once more he led the mighty hymn which his flock bellowed out right lustily. For Englishmen were less morbid and had more of self-possession than now. They were swifter far to translate feeling into action, rather than let it fret the inactive mind.

In ten minutes the harbour was empty ; but the light shone on.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FALSE LIGHT

ON the night of her return, *The Grey Bird*, helped by fair winds, had made good speed and was punctual to time, but then there beat up the sou'-wester and the end of her journey promised to be rough. She had sighted Hordell's Head before the storm broke and then stood out to sea again, but when it began to blow, Nicholas, indifferent for himself and crew, but heartily sorry for his passenger, did all he could to ease the boat. He struck his foresail, ran up his mizen in place of it and set a small triangular "storm" mizen aft. This rendered *The Grey Bird* snug enough, and she rode over the increasing seas as easily as a gull. But one below nevertheless felt the increased liveliness of the vessel, set his teeth and prepared for more suffering.

The accident that brought Paul Deschamps so swiftly home again, at a moment of all others when his heart was in his native land, may be briefly told.

Within one day of Havre, which was the port to which Tresilion's vessel had sailed, Deschamps, who was a landsman and little familiar with the ways of a boat, had got down deck to leeward just as the lugger was tacking. She heeled over, and the foresail sheet going taut as a harp string, shot Paul into the sea. The ducking would not hurt him, and knowing that he was a fine swimmer the men aboard laughed at his accident and waited for him to swim alongside. But this he could not do, and cried to them that he was injured. Then Stapleton went overboard and the others stood by with ropes. Lifting Paul presently on to *The Grey Bird* as well as they were able, with tackle hoisted to lessen

his agony, they found the blow from the sheet had broken the passenger's leg above the knee.

In a moment the poor lad's dreams of glory vanished and his only dream was home, with gentle hands to minister to him. The catastrophe took place almost in sight of Havre and the next day he lay in hospital, while twenty-four hours later it proved possible to set his leg. But he was a bad patient, and in a week the doctors decided that it might be better at the earliest opportunity to send him home again. To start immediately was, of course, out of the question ; but his friends of the three-masted trawler were easy to find in Havre. They came to see him, and he made it well worth their while to sail to Daleham with a dispatch the moment that a day for his return could be named. For the rest, stricken down in this unfortunate fashion, he could be of no service to the cause and had the bitter chagrin of knowing that Napoleon was already marching on Paris with all France sweeping to his trumpet's call.

A great revulsion of feeling tortured the youth under this physical calamity, and during the endless hours in hospital, enlivened only by visits from the crew of *The Grey Bird* and the ministrations of a long-faced Sister of Mercy, who wept ceaselessly because God had frowned on King Louis XVIII, Paul began to embrace fresh values and develop the philosophy of life proper to an older man. Chiefly in his thoughts rose the picture of his mother, and her gracious and patient spirit haunted him. He looked back at his own career disfigured by folly and blotted by crime ; and he remembered how one most wickedly wronged had risked her life for him and saved him from the humiliation of arrest and the unknown fate that must have followed it.

Consideration of that matter had long led him to the conclusion that some one within his own innermost circle had played him false, and because he hated Warner Baldwin he was the more disinclined to attribute the villainy to him. Yet it seemed impossible to imagine any other of his acquaintance capable of the deed. From this point he began to wonder at the nature of his reception when he returned home. The circumstances

were unaltered and he suspected that the peril he had fled from might reawait him. And yet his heart cried to return at any risk. He had not attempted to conceal his home-coming and doubted not that his secret enemy at Daleham, if such really existed, would know it with the rest. But it remained to answer guile with guile, and to contrive his return so that it might take place unsuspected and unseen. Himself powerless as a log of wood and destined so to be for many a day, he had many talks with Nicholas upon the subject, and Tresilion, who was being paid at a very generous rate for this upset of all his own plans, had finally settled on a method by which it was hoped Deschamps would be able to evade any inquiry and escape any force awaiting him.

First, then, they settled to return by night, and if the night proved fair, his friends hoped to get him ashore at the Broken Rocks, where John Tresilion perished, and convey him by the subterranean way to Hordell's Hall, where he might be hidden snugly enough until the soldiery were convinced that he had not returned in *The Grey Bird*; but if circumstances combined to prevent such a landing there, as was possible enough at that stormy season of the year, then Nicholas proposed another plan.

The lugger finally sailed for England at the earliest date the physicians permitted Paul to depart.

"I hope there won't be no sojers and no trouble neither," said Nicholas on an occasion of private speech with Monk Karswill. "'Twill be a terrible tricky business carrying this wounded man by the underground way to the Hall, if we've got to do it; and all I be set on is to keep faith with the chaps in Havre and come back the instant moment I can. 'Tis the finest thing we were ever offered, and now's the moment, and if we run all through safe and suent, the fortune of every man in the boat is made."

Karswill admitted the magnitude of the commission; indeed every member of the crew was full of it. Some bold spirits at Havre had a mighty consignment of contraband goods that had been accumulating ever since the death of Emma Tresilion's husband, and they

had welcomed *The Grey Bird* very thankfully, for her absence had deprived them of a lucrative market.

All was settled before Nicholas set sail for home, however, and while he would risk not a keg on this voyage, holding his passenger a sacred responsibility, he promised to return to the shippers as fast as he could come, and carried letters from them for their customers in Plymouth.

And now they were off Daleham Bay; but since doubt existed that danger might lie ashore for their sick passenger, they kept off till dark and then, picking up the land again, prepared to make their port. The weather had changed for the worse; the night was very foul with a high sea and freshening wind, which blew thick drifts of low cloud and obscured the shore.

If a fiend had been permitted to plan the night for Abednego Egg and his companions in crime, the demon could not have hit on a more suitable storm, for heavy vapour flying low obscured the shore as well as the sky, hid all sea marks before dusk and rendered lights uncertain. Thus it came about that Tresilion, straining to pick up the fixed ray of Daleham lighthouse, was not surprised to find it dim and illusive when seen at last through such weather. Indeed he felt thankful to find it at all, and seeing that no other could by any possibility be burning here, looked not too closely upon its quality and was content that he could note its position. Another boat or two was coming up from the west, and for a second he had a fleeting sight of *The Country Lass* from Wales under storm canvas in the murk; but she also had set her course by the light and was going inside it between the Devil's Teeth and the land, while Nicholas designed to round the rocks and so beat back to his moorings by the aid of the harbour lights which would then become visible.

His calculations had been correct enough at another time; but the light he saw through the smother of the storm burned under Daleham Head, and it was Abednego Egg who tended it, not Jacob Merle. Thus, while a little timber trader and a trawler went to windward of the devilish trap, *The Grey Bird* ran leeward and left the

false light under her port bow. Either course was fatal, and just as Tresilion prepared to tack, reckoning himself nearly off Hordell's Head and well clear of the Devil's Teeth, Abel Hooker, who was looking out forward, lifted his voice and shouted "Breakers ahead!"

The master ran to the helm, but it was too late to save her. The wind beat with fury right upon the rocks and the great gash of white already showed—a writhing, roaring mass of breaking billows—against the blackness of the sea not a hundred yards ahead. The livid foam ran away east and west and already the thunder of it drowned the shouts of the men.

"We're out of our reckoning—'tis the Teeth!" yelled Monk Karswill. "We shall be on 'em in half a minute!"

There was no room to tack, and it seemed to the agonized watchers that their quivering vessel's fore foot was already in the breakers when suddenly, like a lamp lowered through the clouds from heaven, the steadfast and brilliant beam of the lighthouse blazed upon their peril. Not two hundred yards away it shone to the west and told them in a moment of their error and their position. But it seemed that the beacon had only flashed to light the last moments of dying men. The character of the crew was manifest at this instant and every one proved staunch.

But Tresilion meant not to die without a fight. Thanks to the sudden illumination the immediate position of the ridge east of the lighthouse was easily observed, and though moments alone offered for his survey and resolve, Nicholas used them. He saw one great familiar rock heaving out of the welter right ahead and knew that he was placed where a chance in a thousand still offered. For the Throat opened right in his path, and if by merciful fortune he could hit it, he was saved.

He bawled to the others to stand by, pointed to the rocks and explained their sole hope. He had scarcely spoken when *The Grey Bird* was labouring in the foam with the back wash from the crag breaking over her and her decks flooded. She staggered in the conflicting

currents that fought to tear her asunder, and now it seemed that she must be on the submerged rocks to starboard, while a second later the black, uplifted fang above the Throat towered over their foremast. She seemed to stand still and shiver between them for one fearful moment. Her decks were a foot beneath the foam and each man held on as he might, waiting for the crash of the strike to come ; but the ordeal, though terrific enough, was brief, and Nicholas at the helm was the first to know that *The Grey Bird* had got through, while yet the white water beat over her and poured down her companion ladder.

Below Paul Deschamps lay alone, waiting for death. Hooker had shouted to him that they were on the rocks and he was prepared to perish. He endured the tremendous moments without a human voice to whisper hope. He lay under a little swinging lamp and knew by the convulsions of the boat and the shouts above him that the moment of destruction had come. He felt the tremendous impact of the waves and heard them break and pour over his head while the boat shook. Then, in a flood—volumes of water poured down and surged to the edge of the bunk wherein he lay. He turned his face to the wall and waited for the final crash that would rend the sinking lugger like touchwood and set his spirit free ; but though the water still washed up and down beneath him and once flung a cold coverlet over him, no final catastrophe brought the death for which he now waited in patience. The time, that to him, cooped below, seemed a century, was but the progress of seconds, and anon, louder than the din of the waves and the rattle of the seas, he heard the voice of Nicholas.

“We’re through ! All hands to the pump !”

Instantly a harsh jolt and clank began, and *The Grey Bird* slowly emptied herself of the water that had flooded her and driven her low. But she was safe, and her skipper, scarcely daring yet to believe the white hell raging upon the rocks was now astern, bade Hooker descend again for a moment to reassure Deschamps.

Within a quarter of an hour all remaining peril for the

lugger had vanished. They waited till she was buoyant again, then leisurely and uninjured crept in to their own moorings. They picked them up with a night mark and the harbour lights for guide.

Anon Deschamps, who was tended with womanly care and consideration, found himself stripped, dressed in dry clothes and lifted to a dry bunk.

"Our troubles be over," said Nicholas to him, after he described the marvel of their escape, "but yours are only beginning I reckon. However, we'll hope that news of your return hasn't got to your enemies; and if it has, and they're waiting for you, we'll have you ashore beyond their reach at cock light, if the sea will let us. Any fool can chouse a soldier."

The wonder, as they rode moored fore and aft that night and watched the storm subside, was how the lighthouse lamp had failed until long after the hour of darkness, and of what nature was the false light that had so nearly lured them to destruction.

"What man on God's earth wants for to drown me and my boat?" asked Nicholas. But none could answer the question.

He had spoken of troubles at an end; and of some that night it might have been said truly, for west of the false light men had died, when the little *Country Lass* struck and went to pieces. There, west of the Head, craft had been exposed to the full fury of the gale and had come ashore in a fearful sea, swiftly to be splintered against the limestone crags. None was near to mark the catastrophe or help the wretches perishing beneath; but their end had been swift, for rocks and waves combined to destroy them, and before the lighthouse opened its golden eye, nine men, the crew of the trader and a trawler, had all gone to their account. Nor was the tale yet told, for when the daylight came a solitary mast rose above the Devil's Teeth, where some small vessel striving to do as Tresilion had intended and round the edge of the reef, had erred and been lost thereon.

With one other we are concerned, before the day breaks, and it remains to keep vigil with Abednego Egg. Unhappily his cursed work was done just after fall of

night, though time proved that the tale of evil must have been greater, but for the rekindling of the true light and the victory won by Faith Tresilion and her crew.

Egg, squatting like a spirit of evil behind his fire, fed it with naphtha and kept it as steady as he was able in a case of glass which he had erected for the purpose. He designed to have it burning until midnight if he could ; then obliterate all traces and go his way to reap a harvest at dawn ; but upon this project there suddenly blazed the real beacon, and the steady splendour of it struck upon his storm-beaten eyes with the force of a miracle. For he knew what had been done earlier in the evening, but was ignorant of the attempt at succour, nor indeed guessed that any such achievement had been within the power of human beings.

The accusing glare beat upon the old man where he worked, and his own light seemed to shrink and dwindle, as he did himself. Indeed he quickly extinguished it, for something akin to panic got hold upon him and he grew fearful suddenly, that either supernatural powers were marshalled against him, or that his accomplices had played him false. Wholly ignorant of the awful havoc he had already accomplished, and suspecting that his great labours had been in vain, he collected his gear as best he could in the storm and crept off the sea-facing ledge to regain the summit of the cliff. With some difficulty he did so, and then, flogged by the wind and rain that raged unfettered over the Head, he sought a donkey and cart which had brought him and which were now drawn up together in the shelter of the wall. The brute brayed a greeting and welcomed its master thankfully.

He was soon on his way, and then, as though the very mills of God could not grind slowly for this aged fiend, a swift and sudden Nemesis overtook him and he was swept out of life to join those vanished spirits he had already sent to their account.

It happened strangely. Bewildered in the storm and great darkness, for over Daleham Head the furies were unloosed, he made a wrong turn, and instead of keeping the straight course that ran

through the midst of the unfinished fortifications, he followed another way that diverged, where certain cisterns and stores for powder and shell had been dug beneath the level of the earth. These were twenty feet deep and entered by flights of steps. All would have been duly completed and covered ; but when the English dread of invasion ceased, the extensive works were abandoned, and as yet the subterranean chambers were not filled in. Only a single rail, to protect the sheep that grazed over the Head, was flung round about these dangerous places, and now Abednego Egg, forcing his donkey to hasten through the tempest, drove it through a fence and fell with it into a stone cistern beneath.

The beast was instantly killed ; the man might have lived till daylight and succour came ; but the glass that he had used to build his lamp was smashed into a thousand pieces about him, so that in a dozen places his fallen carcase was stabbed and gashed. One wound sufficed ; and though he fought fiercely for a while to extricate himself, he sank down at last, became unconscious and perished while, unknown to himself, his blood flowed from a gash in his thigh. Thus the wretch died among the implements of his rascality, and Elijah Newte, seeking him with fear at the first tremor of dawn, found him dead in a foot of blood-stained water at the bottom of the cistern. Thereupon the sailor fled back to the harbour that he might mingle with those assembled there and in no measure become involved in the old man's deeds and death. He had seen over-night with Warner Baldwin, how their own work was frustrated, and knew that those who reached the lighthouse, at such risk of their own lives, must have seen from the lantern the gleam of Egg's fire upon the Head. Thus the dead man would sink into his grave with the everlasting curses of Daleham for covering ; but none need discover those who committed the outrage at the lighthouse.

CHAPTER XXV

AT HORDELL'S HEAD

IT is not necessary to follow Faith Tresilion and her crew of three in their desperate battle, for the sequel has been announced. Suffice it that after a struggle with such a sea as none of the men had ever fought in an open boat before, they won to the comparative shelter of the rock-girt pool beneath the lighthouse. Here, however, all was chaos, and over the rocks on either side of the little bay, volumes of dark water thundered. To the last moment infinite risk attached to the venture and the landing was attended with great difficulty. They made the boat fast by the head to the ladder, then sent up the helmswoman first. She found the lighthouse door open and the interior awash. Oxenham followed, then went Peter Merle; and Pawlet, who was in command, only left the boat as a great sea poured down on either side of the lighthouse and swamped her. He held on to the iron ladder under this deluge, then, half drowned, ascended to the safety of the beacon and fastened the door behind him. Within was black darkness, but Faith had already climbed to a higher chamber and Pawlet now hastened aloft to her. There two men lay bound and gagged. There was no light, but a sudden ray, which came through the window of the chamber, revealed 'an old and young sufferer. Not considering whence this strange illumination proceeded, Pawlet availed himself of it, and while Faith took the gag from her uncle's mouth, Gilbert Oxenham ministered to his companion.

Old Merle spoke instantly in a shaking voice.

"The light first! The light first!" he said. "There's flint and tinder aloft to your hand."

He was too weak to climb himself, but his younger companion crawled upwards with Pawlet's help, and in three minutes from the arrival of the boat, the lighthouse threw its steady white beam into the storm.

From the lantern could be observed the mysterious light that had already illuminated the darkness of the two keepers. Pawlet saw it and the younger Merle who stood with him. It blinked awhile longer and then suddenly vanished.

"You ought to have been on Daleham Head, gauger," said Jacob Merle's assistant. "There's wreckers out to-night."

"God in heaven! I thought that old-fashioned wickedness was a thing of the past," said Peter Merle.

Anon, fetching cordial from the lighthouse stores for the ill-used men, helping themselves to a change of garments and lighting a great fire, they listened to the narrative of old Merle.

"It must have been three in the afternoon," he said, "and I'd marked the signs of bad weather coming and felt my heart pity—not the ships, for I knew they'd give me a wide berth—but the birds. Because you must understand that the poor birds be coming back to this country now in great numbers, and of a stormy night in March they'll often lose their bearings and, flying as they do a hundred mile an hour at the least, come smashing into my lantern before they know it. Then full oft, after such a night, I'll find 'em in the gallery outside, great and small, a score in a night—all with their poor necks broken and their beautiful feathers—"

"Push on, uncle," said Peter. "We haven't come out to hear about the birds."

"'Twas afternoon I tell you," continued the old man, as he sat, drank some spirits and rubbed his bruised limbs, "when what should I see but a boat putting off under Daleham Head and slipping out across the channel. I thought 'twas a crabber; but very soon I see that the two men in her meant the lighthouse, and I wondered what could be bringing 'em. It was blowing then, but nothing to name, and she soon popped across. All I could see before they come up was two big men, both in

blue jerseys and sea-boots. I didn't get a sight of their mugs, worse luck, no more did my mate. For their devils' faces were hidden. They'd got black stuff with eye-holes in it, like a pair of hangmen ; and God's my judge but hangmen I thought they were. They was on to us like a pair of tigers, and of course I couldn't do nothing—an old, ancient man like me. But Parsons showed a bit of fight and got a whack over the head for his pains that made him as easy to tackle as a babby. Neither of the villains opened his mouth, and all I can say about 'em is that they was big men—out of the common big both of 'em—and one had red hands and t'other had white. And the white-handed chap pinioned me and the other bound Parsons. They are old seasoned ropes and tell you nought, but they've been often in the water.

"Next I thought that we was going to be carried out of the lighthouse neck and crop ; but that wasn't their purpose. They did no more but jam gags in our mouths, though who they thought would hear us if we was to shout, I know not. They left us on the floor, like a pair of trussed fowls, and doubtless went below and rowed ashore so quick as they might, before the weather got worse."

The rescuers listened with deep interest, and Faith, who now wore a suit of clothes left in a locker by a lighthouse keeper at present off duty ashore, cried out indignantly at the cruelty her uncle had endured.

"Give me those men and I'd kill 'em with my own hand !" she said.

Then Parsons spoke. He was weak and had been injured about the forehead.

"And the light—the light that danced around after 'twas dark—that light burned on Daleham Head. There's wreckers come to the place ; and 'twill fall to this man to find 'em and bring 'em to the gallows, where they belong."

He pointed at Pawlet.

The storm shook the tower and they could hear the crash of the great waters against its shuddering side. None slept. They talked on through the endless night,

marked the wind abate, and prayed for the day. It came at last, but before dawn Parsons grew very ill and relapsed into unconsciousness ere the day broke. He had a concussion, but none knew it, and Peter Merle did more harm than good by plying the lad with liquor.

Towards morning the wind sank to a whine and the sea went down. Then the men strained their eyes upon the grey wilderness long before the lighthouse lamp was extinguished. But no rag or sail or bare pole might yet be marked, and not until an hour later did the scud lift and light illuminate the scene to show it. Now they saw two things—a solitary mast sticking up half a mile away on the Devil's Teeth, and *The Grey Bird* snug at her moorings outside the harbour.

Their plans were swiftly made. The lighthouse boat, a small, stout dinghy stowed aloft in the gallery that ran round the lantern, was rigged on her davits and lowered to the water, for Faith insisted on going immediately to *The Grey Bird*, and Peter Merle was anxious to depart. He had already broke his leave from Plymouth, and the discipline of those days made him fear for himself, despite the reason for his absence. Therefore Pawlet determined to stop with the sick man until Doctor Budd should come off from shore at the earliest opportunity. All were now in their own garments again, and Oxenham and Merle rowed the lighthouse boat, while Faith steered her. To visit the wreck on the rocks was not necessary, as they had seen with glasses that only a solitary spar remained above water. Therefore they rowed straight to the lugger through a sea wild and heavy enough, though falling rapidly and trifling compared to that which they had fought ten hours before.

They were sighted from *The Grey Bird* before they reached her in the dusk of dawn, and then quick questions and answers informed all of the situation and dictated the necessary plans. Deschamps heard how, through information that must have reached them secretly, the soldiers were again in Daleham and would doubtless await his landing; while Nicholas explained to Faith

the manner of their escape and the miracle of their salvation on the preceding night.

Even as the first smudge of the harbour pier grew black out of the dawn, a twinkle of scarlet showed on the end of it, where Sergeant Bulstrode's picket kept watch over the quay—evidence that the plan already matured between Nicholas and his passenger demanded swift execution. Some preliminary steps were necessary, however, and the arrival of the new-comers proved very opportune. Now two boats left *The Grey Bird*: her own and the lighthouse dinghy. In the smaller craft went Faith, Peter Merle and Abel Hooker from *The Grey Bird* to Daleham; while the lugger's boat, almost invisible under the dim light and in the heavy swell that still drove shoreward, made for a distant landing well known to those who rowed. With her went Oxenham, Nicholas Tresilion, Paul Deschamps and Monk Karswill. The tide was high and the final destination of the wounded man could not at present be approached; but Hordell's Head held many a snug nook only to be reached from the sea, and into one of these, sheltered from the south-west by a tongue of the cliffs, the unseen boat soon shot and discharged her burden. Deschamps was carefully carried ashore and left with Oxenham, to be called for when night came; and a bag of rations was not forgotten. Then the lugger's boat got back to *The Grey Bird* as swiftly as she was able, yet not before she had been seen stealing through the dimpsy light by one pair of eyes ashore. Meantime Faith, having summoned Doctor Budd, made haste, first to her own home and then to "Four Oaks."

The mingled blessings and curses of her mother came as much from the heart as the tears of her friends; but she stopped only long enough with Honorine and Madame Deschamps to explain that Paul was safe and would be ashore in secret hiding before he slept again. Of his injury she also told them, and promised to return, before the day was done, with intelligence of how the plot to land him had carried, and what they must be prepared to do. She hastened then to Sir Simeon Glanvil with the news that all was well with Gilbert

Oxenham, and finally returned to the quay in time to see her brother's boat on its arrival in harbour. A little crowd had already collected to witness the landing. She came, with Nicholas, Copleston and Karswill, and as she did so, another boat put out for the lighthouse, rowed by half-a-dozen men with Dr. Budd for their passenger. He had ridden swiftly to the harbour, and a fisherman now walked his horse up and down the quay until his return.

A heartfelt cheer greeted Nick and his friends, for their perils and their escape were known ; but among the first to stop him on his landing came Sergeant Bulstrode with a dozen soldiers.

"Morning, my young hero," he began, "nobody's better pleased than me to see you trim and taut after such a night ; but that said, I must ask after the gentleman you've fetched from France. Have you left him aboard, or is one of these men with you Monseer Paul Deschamps in disguise ?"

Karswill and Copleston grinned and denied the suggestion.

"These are Monk and Richard, part of my crew, and this man is Abel Hooker," said Nicholas, as Abel returned. Then he caught sight of Elijah Newte standing head and shoulders above the rest of the crowd.

"And here's another that has sailed with me in his time," he added. "We're all known to everybody on this quay ; and now you know who we are, perhaps you'll tell us your name."

"And welcome ; but that's no odds now," answered Bulstrode. "This slippery young Frenchman gave us the go-by very clever indeed a while ago ; but that sort of thing don't happen twice. We don't mean to leave this quay without the fine man ; so you'd best to row back to yonder little ship and tell him so."

"You'd best to row back yourself, Sergeant," answered Nicholas, "for as sure as I'm standing on my own dung-hill again, my boat is empty. You can see for yourself. Look at the sea-gulls perched along the gunwale. They know there's not a man aboard. But

we'll take you out there, or if you don't trust us, you can go alone."

Sergeant Bulstrode was much concerned. To his landsman's eye the sea still presented fearful difficulties ; but there was nothing for it ; his duty demanded a visit to *The Grey Bird*, and presently he selected the largest open boat he could find in the harbour, manned it with a dozen men, took off six uneasy red-coats and went out to the lugger.

Meanwhile Nicholas, in no concern of the result, for not a trace of the passenger remained aboard, went up the village about his business. Time was very pressing and he intended to be off to France again that night for an exceptional cargo—a cargo indeed beyond the dreams of any smuggler who had ever run goods into Daleham. But first he had to overhaul and re-victual the boat, and secondly he could not sail again without visiting his mother.

The crowd separated ; Karswill hastened home with his family hanging about him ; Hooker, too, went to his cottage, and Copleston joined Nicholas. Then, much to his surprise, Newte heard himself addressed and saw Tresilion at his elbow.

Little guessing the truth of the man, easy Nicholas greeted him with friendship. For he needed him.

"How's yourself, Elijah ?" he asked. "If you'd been along with me last night, you might have said the seamanship as I learned from you wasn't all thrown away."

"A great and wonderful piece of work," answered the other, "and 'twill never be forgot in Daleham. And I wish to God you'd take me back on the boat, for I'm sick o' the shore and tired of the coffin-maker."

Nicholas considered, but not the possibility of restoring Elijah to his place on *The Grey Bird*, for that could never be. Even if he had been disposed to pardon the past, his mother was not, and she hated Elijah and had never trusted him ; but Tresilion did not mistrust, and in view of a great approaching coup, he felt that to have this man ready and busy on his account ashore was worth consideration. For Newte knew everything.

He could approach Mr. Egg and Mr. Cawdle for the necessary preparation on land. He could take the letters to Plymouth that Nick had brought from France ; he could do a thousand things to facilitate the convenience of the smugglers. It was worth while having him on their side.

"See here," he said, "come on out of this crowd. I want a word or two with you."

Copleston was despatched to look after stores and Nicholas, alone with his old messmate, laid bare the truth in five minutes. The other could scarcely believe his ears, but so it fell out : the man he had plotted to murder twelve hours before told him of an extraordinary run about to be made and invited his co-operation ashore.

"Afloat I don't want you no more," said Tresilion. "After all these weeks at Havre, with nought to do but make love and larn French, I'm so good at the lingo now as you are. I didn't waste my time I promise you. But ashore here, you may be a tidy bit of use yet, and I'll trust you for this very good reason, that it'll pay you ten thousand times better to be true than false."

He told of the run and specified the night on which he intended to be back.

"If it's blowing, of course we shan't come in, and if we see the signal for danger, of course we shan't," he said ; "but if so be we can get the stuff ashore, on the night of the fourth of April, we shall thankfully do so. You can work with my sister ; but not another living soul ashore must know, save Egg and Cawdle. 'Tis a mighty big thing and I don't like even to leave it at Hordell's Head for a night, though 'twill come up there of course from the Broken Rocks by the usual way."

He mentioned a hundred details, directed Elijah to meet him again in two hours at the quay, and then went home to his mother and sister.

Faith had prepared a mighty breakfast of sausages and beer, and while he ate and drank, she talked, and his mother, strangely silent for once, feasted her great, shining black eyes upon him.

"Thank the Lord as I see you getting them sausages

down your neck," said Emma, "and if it wasn't for your sister there, and a few other heroes, you'd have the conger eels tearing the flesh off your bones instead of being at a Christian breaksis yourself. And mark this, as sure as I'm a bed-ridden wonder, the man Elijah Newte has got a hand in this job. I feel it in my bowels and my bones, and time will show I speak true!"

Her son started at this theory, and it shut his mouth as to Newte. He told them of his plans and of the work left to do before he sailed. The coming haul promised to be unexampled, and only one cloud fell on his mother's heart when she heard that Nicholas intended it should be the last.

"Let me come out of this safe, with three hundred pound or more for my share, and I've done with run goods for evermore," he declared. "Bob Pawlet helped to save my life last night, and taking one thing with another, I'm getting full up with this caper. I don't like so many adventures, for I'm a peace-lover by nature."

His mother was too wise to say much just then. But she doubted not that she would change his mind when the time came for doing so. Now she received back her children from the very shadow of death, and suddenly realizing the situation, bade both go down on their knees and thank God for all His blessings.

"And when you've thanked Him, you can thank me," she said, "for be very sure the watching Lord took account of your mother, and if the prayer of a righteous man availeth much, then 'tis a cast-iron sartainty that the prayer of a righteous woman availeth more—because they be so much rarer."

Her brother confided presently in Faith that Elijah Newte was helping ashore, and would assist her to have all ready on the night of the fourth of April at Hordell's Head.

"But before that great night cometh," he told her, "there's other things to be done up there, and belike the young men will need your wits to help 'em. It stands thus: we've brought home Paul Deschamps, as you know, and to-night, afore I sail for France, I'm going

to get him out of Cowrie Cavern, where he lies with Gilbert Oxenham at present, and to land him by the Broken Rocks. Then we take him up to our cellar at the Hall. But the rest's work for them ashore that care about him. I've done my part. No doubt the soldiers will march home to-night, after they find he's not in *The Grey Bird*; and when they do, you can show Master Oxenham the way out of Hordell's and help to get the poor chap to his home. That's all easy enough if there's nobody to interfere. But let it be done very secret, and let it be done quick. We don't want your Bob Pawlet or none of his friends to be interested in the ruin. And we don't want strange people poking about at the Hall. All must be clear and quiet there afore the night of April the fourth."

She comprehended, little guessing of the difficulties destined to prevent her from falling in with her brother's wishes ; and then, after noon, bidding them farewell and directing Faith to be at the Broken Rocks that night at low tide, he went his way.

The Grey Bird was brought to the inner harbour later in the day, victualled and carefully overhauled ; but Nicholas saw no more of Sergeant Bulstrode, or his company. It was reported that they had gone on to the lugger, spent an hour upon it, satisfied themselves that no human being was concealed there and came ashore again. They had then marched out of the harbour, and their future movements those at the quay could not report.

One was able to tell, however, that the sergeant had speech at *The Sailors' Joy* both with Mr. Sidebottom and Lieutenant Warner Baldwin, for thither Bulstrode repaired at noon and food was served to his company at the inn. It appeared that he and his men, since their own mission had failed, were anxious to set about other work and hunt the rascals who had visited the lighthouse on the previous afternoon. But that was not their quest and Pawlet claimed those operations as his own.

From the lighthouse had come news also. Doctor Budd found Jacob Merle's assistant, Parsons, in sore

need of attention and had brought him ashore with Robert Pawlet; but old Jacob himself appeared none the worse for his adventure. Another keeper had already joined him and taken out two pairs of pistols. Lastly, rumour ran that a boy, playing truant on Daleham Head in search of sea-gulls' eggs, had discovered the corpses of Abednego and his ass in a cistern of the fort. But this was not confirmed and Nicholas had put to sea again before the truth of the coffin-maker's tragedy became known.

At dusk *The Grey Bird* departed—ostensibly for the mackerel fishery, for she had taken her nets aboard. The last to bid the master and his crew good-bye and good luck was Pawlet. Then the lugger went to sea, but returning after dark, she dropped her boat off Hordell's Head and brought Paul Deschamps and his friend out of Cowrie Cavern. None the worse for their long day in that secret haunt, and only eager to know what had become of the soldiers, Oxenham and the sufferer joined the boat again, and while Paul begged to be allowed to land on the foreshore of his mother's home, whence he had departed, Gilbert and Nicholas bade him run no such risk. Indeed the event proved that they were right, for when Faith presently met them at the Broken Rocks, she was able to say that their tormentors had not left Daleham.

"I've had a talk with your sister," she said to Deschamps. "The soldiers are picketed nigh Four Oaks, and they say they've heard from a private source that you was taken out of the lugger at dawn this morning and brought ashore somewhere. So if you go home, 'tis all up. But if we carry you by the under-sea way to Hordell's, then you'll be safe till they take themselves off. 'Tis snug enough there, and none knows the secret of the place but ourselves, and 'tis little likely you'll have to bide there long."

"We was seen this morning, for all our early start, and 'tis your jackdaw cousin have told the soldiers that he sighted our boat—be sure of that," said Nicholas. "You've got a long reckoning with him when you can stand on your legs again. But be it as 'twill, he don't

know the secret of Hordell's, and there's none in Daleham but Elijah Newte that do. And he's my side, because it will best pay him to be. Besides he need know nought of this."

The tide was out and they carried Deschamps to the secret passage that led from the rocks to the cliffs above. No light was struck till they entered the subway under the sea-weed ; then Faith went ahead with a lantern and Nicholas, Oxenham and Monk Karswill bore Paul very carefully on a stretcher that had served him from the morning. They made the ascent successfully and the sufferer found temporary peace at last. His hiding-place was dry and sheltered from wind and rain, for he found himself in that snug cellar where Nicholas had been surprised long ago by the arrival of a hunted fox. Here he was left in comparative comfort, with Faith to watch over him until Oxenham should visit Tudor Towers and return. She showed him the way out through the ruin and how to find it again. Then Nicholas, his work done, retreated and returned with Karswill, where the boat lay beneath. They soon pulled back to *The Grey Bird*; and she was hull down upon her great venture long before another morning dawned.

CHAPTER XXVI

A POSER FOR ROBERT PAWLET

NICHOLAS made no mistake in his surmise that Deschamps had to thank his cousin for the fact that Sergeant Bulstrode and his company remained at Daleham.

Warner's activities had been reduced for the sake of his own skin, and, after helping Newte to render old Merle and his assistant powerless, the young man, once safely ashore again, had returned as swiftly as possible to the vicarage. There he declared himself suffering from a return of his old sickness and had retired to his chamber. When, therefore, Doctor Baldwin set forth for the harbour, his nephew did not accompany him but kept his room ; and he felt indisposed in earnest when the lighthouse lamp flashed upon his window blind. On the following morning, before the household had stirred, he was up and abroad ; and it was he who, of all Daleham, first saw *The Grey Bird* riding peacefully at her moorings. The sight staggered him and sent the blood to his head, for it meant that his crime had failed of its object and that he had committed unspeakable evil in vain. He cursed till the wild creatures of the dawn fled before him. His agitation was extreme. A tempest of hate re-awakened in him and he glared through his spy-glass at the little vessel. Then, suddenly he marked a boat leave *The Grey Bird*, glide easterly in the troughs of the great ground swell that followed the storm and presently disappear behind Hordell's Head. She was gone twenty minutes and returned as she had come ; and though the watcher's glass was not strong enough to certify the fact, he doubted not that Paul Deschamps

had been aboard and was now hidden in one of the many nooks and crannies that honeycombed the Head. He guessed at the sequel and doubted not that when the troops were back on their road to Plymouth, Paul would be restored by way of the little beach of "Four Oaks" to his home, and thus return as he had gone.

Not until later did he visit his aunt; but Honorine had already seen Faith before he did so. There were grave doubts growing in the air concerning Baldwin, and the ladies were warned to give him no information whatever.

Indeed Honorine, in answer to his anxious inquiries, informed him that Paul was not in *The Grey Bird*, but that her mother had news of him. Pressed to inform him of its nature she bluntly declined and he went his way, now firmly convinced that his observations were not mistaken. He betook himself to the harbour and stood on the quay when Sergeant Bulstrode returned from his search on *The Grey Bird*.

The sergeant loved him little, but was none the less obliged to listen while Baldwin told his tale. They retired to *The Sailors' Joy*, and after a private confabulation, it was planned that the home of the Deschamps should be secretly invested that night and the foreshore beneath it closely watched. Meantime Bulstrode sent two men back to Plymouth for orders and resented his task very heartily.

The two scoundrels who had thus far worked together, now pursued their own devious ways, for, since the safe return and departure of *The Grey Bird*, their interests had divided. Thus far both had escaped suspicion and the mystery of the outrage at the lighthouse as yet showed no sign of being solved.

To Pawlet in the course of his business, fell the investigation, but no clue worthy of the name existed to help him, though such facts as Jacob Merle and his companion had announced were duly stored in his memory. That certain men had acted in collusion with Abednego Egg seemed clear, but their motives and purpose were hidden from Pawlet, and as yet he could not tell whether a general wish to destroy shipping for

wreckers' gains had actuated the trio, or whether the destruction of particular vessels had been aimed at. Two were known to be due on the night in question, and since Egg was notoriously on bad terms with the dead master of *The Country Lass*, it seemed reasonable to guess that his actions had been aimed at the little coaster ; but whether those who assisted him were working for the same purpose or had a grudge against Tresilion and his crew, Pawlet as yet knew not. A time was coming when light would be thrown on the darkness ; but one of the culprits had at least paid for his villainy, and now happened an incident that for a time distracted the exciseman from this matter and threatened gravely the private and most intimate relations of his life.

Two mornings later he had been busy under Daleham Head, directing the salvage operations on the wrecked vessels and assisting the sad search for the dead, of whom some were still missing, when there approached him the great figure of Elijah Newte. He was out of work, for the dead coffin-maker's affairs were in other hands, and he begged the exciseman to give him employment. Pawlet declined, however, as the other knew that he would, whereupon, Newte, assuming a very different tone, bade Robert step aside and listen to him.

"There's something you've got to hear," he said.
"Tis your business to give ear to me and I'll thank you so to do."

The sun had not yet risen, though the first glimmer of reflected fires had touched to splendour small clouds flashing above the eastern horizons of the sea. Larks shrilled in the foreglow aloft. A concourse of little calves, still recumbent and asleep on the silvery grass within the forts, showed morning light casting a thin streak of brightness upon their backs and ears.

It was the fisherman who stood master of the situation now about to be unfolded, and his firm tone and dominant manner surprised the listener. Indeed, Pawlet was ill at ease. He heartily disliked Newte, knew that he had been a smuggler and believed, since their first unpleasant meeting, that the other was capable of worse evils than those already recorded against him.

This was true enough, as Robert quickly perceived, for Newte, conscious of perfect personal safety, was now about to exact a double revenge—not only on the too trustful Nicholas, but on the strong and hard man who now listened to him. His guile had devised a cunning stroke indeed—a stroke destined inevitably to put both Tresilion and Pawlet at his mercy.

He spoke now in a tone easy and insolent, while the exciseman listened with growing indignation at the knave, and itched to throw him over the cliff edge. But he sank before the terrific attack now directly opened upon his own conscience. That it was a bare-faced rogue who thrust the dilemma upon him could not be questioned ; but the fact did not alter Pawlet's position.

" If you'll give me no work, I'll give you some," began Newte. " When I offered friendship and you declined it, you were a bigger fool than you knew. I knocked you out of time the first minute we met, because you came poking your nose in where it wasn't wanted ; but since then a good bit have happened, and no doubt you think there's nobody so clever as you. However, them as won't be my friends oft find me an ugly enemy. It's in a nutshell, Robert Pawlet, and knowing you be very proud of doing your duty afore the nation, I come to help you to do it."

" I don't need your help," answered the other.

" Oh yes, you do. You list to me and keep your own mouth shut. There's a chap by the name of Nicholas Tresilion, and when his father died I wanted to marry his sister. The woman refused, and her people backed her up. From that moment they had to reckon with me. But I was a long-suffering man. I even offered to make it up and be their friend after I left the boat. Then that cat-a-mountain, Emma Tresilion, flung her physic bottle at me and insulted me ; and from that moment 'twas all up with them."

" What is this to me ? They were right to cast you out."

" Listen, my bold chap. 'Tis this much to you. Nicholas, with less wits than his mother and less guile than his sister, was off the boat and desperate busy two

days since—making ready to go after the mackerel—eh?"

"I want to hear nothing about Nicholas Tresilion from you," said Pawlet.

"No doubt—no doubt. 'Twould please you better and save you a lot of trouble if wings grew out of his shoulders. But he ain't an angel yet and stands a poor chance of ever turning into one. 'Tis an awkward fix you're in, gauger, but you can't get out of it, because if I go to Plymouth and tell your betters how you wouldn't hear me when I brought news of a record of run goods from France—more than twice a thousand pounds of stuff—chiefly lace and spirits and baccy—if I tell 'em that at Plymouth—well, you'd soon hear something to shock you I'm fearing. So there it is. On the night of the fourth of April next, my gentleman brings ashore the finest smuggled cargo that ever landed at Daleham; and you've got to lay him by the heels when the time comes—aye, you've got to do your duty, or else there's an end of you in His Majesty's service, or any other."

The rascal grinned and drove home his point.

"That's my revenge on Nicholas, and on you, and on your sweetheart, my fine fellow; and mind this: if you warn Faith, or breathe a word of it to her, then the game's up and I squeak at Plymouth. In fact you've got no choice but to do your duty, which you came here to do, and not one farden damn will any man or woman pity you, because for an exciseman to go running after a smuggler's sister was the work of a fool. . . . But that's your affair, not mine. All I've got to do be to tell you when and how the stuff is going to be run; and all you've got to do is to listen and take advantage of what I tell you. And if you act as you ought, you'll nab the lot—not only Tresilion and Hooker and Karswill and Copleston, but also your fine girl as well, for she'll be busy ashore, I promise you. Then there's that bad old rip Ned Cawdle, of Appleby's—and he's in it too, I assure you; and your job's to know just where to put your hand on him when the time comes. 'Twould have been rather more than your wits would have tackled single-handed with only your louts at the station to help you; but, thanks to me,

'twill all be as easy as falling off a five-barred gate. And you've got to do it—else to quod you go yourself for playing hookem-snivey with the smugglers!"

If honest scorn could have withered Mr. Newte, withered he would have been, but he was proof against angry glances and contempt. It mattered not at all that the exciseman despised him. Like many another bad man, Elijah was an excellent judge of a good one, and he felt very confident that Robert Pawlet would do his duty, whatever might be the cost to himself. That the arrest and ruin of Nicholas must unquestionably mean the end of the preventive officer's own romance, Newte did not doubt; but he felt very well pleased to strike Faith as well as her brother; he rejoiced to picture their mother when the disaster fell upon her; nor did he regard Pawlet himself as a mere pawn in the game, for he desired to smite him also.

Many a knave has made capital out of the sure knowledge that an honest man will do his duty, and Elijah Newte had now found a situation ready to his hand. The facts being as they were, Pawlet possessed no liberty of choice whatever. He had to shatter his own personal hopes of happiness, or evade his duty and ruin his career in his own eyes and those of his employers. Even if he refused to comply with Elijah's orders, Nicholas Tresilion would be no better off, because the traitor was prepared to take his secret elsewhere; while if Pawlet dared to warn Faith that he knew of her brother's project and intended to prevent it, Newte would be in a position to inform against him as one who connived with the smugglers.

Before this crushing challenge the exciseman did a remarkable thing. He mastered himself, controlled and conquered the tempest of his temper, and admitted frankly to Elijah that he had placed him in a position which, as an honest man, left him no choice of action.

"You can speak freely," he said. "'Tis idle for me to withstand you. You are on the side of law and order, and when the Lord chooses our weapons 'tis for us to use 'em."

Then he heard every particular of the approaching

coup and was told how *The Grey Bird* would arrive on the night of the fourth of April, how Faith would signal them if all were safe for their arrival, how the transhipment would be made at the Broken Rocks and how, by a secret way, the goods would be conveyed from there to Hordell's Hall and removed from the ruin before morning.

"There are things you must know yonder," continued Newte, pointing across the bay. "A clever little secret, too, that cost the last gauger his life, when he found it out I reckon ; but you shall have it for the asking, my fine fellow. 'Tis a pity no doubt, for all our fortunes would have been made ; but I'm bad to beat when I'm hit on the raw. In fact there's some things that a man like me puts even higher than money ; and revenge be one of 'em. I'm turning honest for the sake of revenge ! So now you know where you stand. *The Grey Bird* ain't catching mackerel off Tresco ; she's on her way to Havre, and from there she'll come back full enough of good things to put half-a-dozen hard-working men out of want for the rest of their natural lives. That's enough for the present, Bob Pawlet. I'll meet you again afore long—at *The Sailors' Joy* perhaps, and you'll stand me a drop of liquor and tell me how I can be most useful to you and help the Government. And now I'll bid you a very good morning."

So saying, Newte winked into the other's white, stern face, lighted his pipe and went his way ; while Pawlet stood like a stone man, motionless, staring before him at the glory of morning. From the unclouded horizon had burst a flame, and the mighty sun ascended in red-gold glory from the sea.

Well pleased with himself, Newte left the Head and returned to Daleham. His star continued to be in the ascendant, for an hour later he had won a promise of work from a man who sailed in one of the smaller trawlers, or "mumble-bees," which fished inshore and rarely kept the sea for more than a day at a time. His anxiety on that head relieved, he began to think upon the future, and now regarding Pawlet as an accomplice in the pending destruction of the Tresilions, he planned a private visit to Hordell's Hall, that he might inspect the familiar

haunt. He had not been there for many days, but knowing the way well enough, at low-tide entered the subterranean passage and proceeded leisurely to the hiding-place at the other end. To these secrets he presently proposed to introduce Robert Pawlet, that they might confer how and where best to take, not only Nicholas and his men, but their cargo to the last ounce. But now Elijah stopped at one point in his journey, and found himself puzzled, for the stones that were always carefully piled below high water mark, to conceal the further progress of the passage upward, had been pulled down and not restored to their usual places. He felt concern at this accident, since it was no part of his plan to have the place discovered without his assistance, and he suspected at first that Pawlet, or one of his men, must have already probed the passage and come upon the hidden way. There was, however, a possibility that the recent storm had done the damage, and the tumult of rising tides knocked down the barrier. Explaining the occurrence thus, he re-built the fallen stones behind him and then proceeded, soon to discover the true reason of their removal. For after ascending the passage, emerging on the side of the cliff where the scrub grew, and then proceeding by the tunnel which finally opened beneath the ruin of Hor-dell's, he arrested his progress suddenly on the very threshold of the cellar. A light burned there—a steady light. The circumstance amazed him, and he kept silent and concealed. For a time he listened, but since no sound reached his ear, he crept forward cautiously and presently stood in the smugglers' hiding-place. He found himself not alone, for another man shared the chamber and beside him burned a lamp. But Paul Deschamps lay sound asleep, for day and night were alike to him while he remained a prisoner here. A comfortable couch he had, with thick blankets and a pillow; beside him, too, was food; but the necessity of the case demanded that he should be much alone at present, and his vigils, until night came, were long and dreary. He was weak, and did not gain strength under his trials; but it seemed certain that the soldiers would swiftly be drawn away from their fruitless siege of "Four Oaks," and he expected

each night to learn that they had departed. Faith and Oxenham ministered to him, but Honorine could not come, for she was occupied at a sick-bed elsewhere. Faith had showed Gilbert the labyrinthine clue of the ruin, while the girl herself always came over the beach and up by the secret way from the Broken Rocks.

Now did Newte, the richer by his discovery, sneak back the way that he had come ; and since it was vital to his new purpose that no friend of the hidden man should find out his discovery, he threw down the stones below as he had found them, and went his way, thankful to meet no other body ascending to the cellar.

The significance of this incident was profound for Mr. Newte ; he perceived that his fortunes, for some time clouded, were beginning fast to mend. He had received no money from Warner Baldwin since the ten guineas he earned at Plymouth ; but now he believed himself in a fair way to fortune. The "mumble-bee" was forgot, for here promised nobler game. He lost no time and, calling at the vicarage, inquired boldly for his ally.

The lieutenant rated him soundly for doing so. But then spoke Elijah, and the other was angered no more.

Mr. Newte made his meaning clear and wasted no words. He announced the possession of most vital knowledge, and inquired what price the other was prepared to pay for it.

"No news of that Frenchman ?" he began, and Warner admitted as much.

"He's in hiding," he said. "I'm as certain as I live that he came back with Tresilion and, what's more his people know it ; and I doubt not they know where he lies ; but he cannot be discovered. For my part I guess that he is inland a hundred miles away ere now. For what was there to keep him here in danger ?"

"When do the soldiers give up the hunt ?"

"To-morrow. They return to Plymouth to-morrow morning."

Elijah reflected.

"When a man's got something worth selling," he said, "'tis natural that he should make the best price possible if he can find a market. And you must pay, for this is

worth more to you than to the nation. I know where Deschamps is hid."

The other was much excited, but distrustful. He strove to prove that Newte could not know; but the old smuggler reminded him of his past, and since Baldwin remembered the incident of the boat from *The Grey Bird* at dawn, he quickly perceived that Newte was not lying. Neither would trust the other however, and the lieutenant refused to pay the figure that Newte demanded.

"I have not fifty guineas in the world," he said.

"Then rake them together out of somebody else's pocket," answered Elijah. "If Master Frenchy, all alive and kicking, isn't worth that, then he can go free for all I care. You don't know your luck. I'll give you till to-morrow to turn this over; and one caution you shall have for nought. If the soldiers depart, you'll lose your man. And more I'll not tell you."

From that day, for the space of a week, a duel of cupidity was fought between the two rascals. Each time they met Newte rose in price, and every time he did so Baldwin refused to pay and hinted at a military arrest. Newte, however, had nothing to lose and laughed at these threats. Meantime, the position of Deschamps and his friends grew more and more distressing, for the soldiers were not withdrawn, and their patrols extended along the cliffs to Hordell's Head. Indeed, Oxenham was already under suspicion. Warner explained to Sergeant Bulstrode that Deschamps was not far distant, in hiding, and that his capture must now be a question only of days. He had also indicated in what direction he believed the fugitive might most likely be concealed, with the result that, all unconsciously, a close watch was kept round about the actual hiding-place of Deschamps.

Advices from Plymouth protracted this visit of the troops, though Sergeant Bulstrode and his men were weary of their wild goose chase, and anxious to return to quarters.

The sergeant, by a curious coincidence, soon found himself in much the same dilemma that had overtaken Robert Pawlet, for the exciseman now felt himself in the position of being under orders from one he despised and

hated ; while Sergeant Bulstrode had long entertained the same loathing for Baldwin ; yet, while judging the lieutenant to be a secret spy on his own people and a man of base character, he found himself called upon to obey his direction and do his bidding at the authority of those he served. His own sympathies were entirely enlisted with the man he was hunting ; but justice and duty demanded that no stone should be left unturned to make a capture, and Bulstrode was building better than he knew towards that end. It became an increasing difficulty to reach Paul without wakening suspicion, and Honoreine and Faith, Gilbert Oxenham and the unfortunate Deschamps himself, began to feel that he must quit Hordell's Hall and that at once, if he were to retain his freedom longer. Honoreine and Oxenham desired to appeal to Pawlet. Indeed they would have done so but for Robert's sweetheart, who pointed out that such a step must be instantly fatal.

"He's on the Government side," she said, "and the moment you told him where Paul is, he'd tell the soldiers. He'd be cruel sorry to do so ; but do it he would, because he'd hold it his duty. That man's got enough conscience for a hundred men. I wish he hadn't ; but he's built so, and he'll never change."

CHAPTER XXVII

TWO PUZZLES FOR FAITH

DOCTOR UPCOTT BALDWIN was laid low, and from his couch of sickness he had called upon Honorine, who nursed him, and bade her do his will. He sat, one foot heavily swathed in wool with an Indian shawl tied gently about it. The suffering member was supported on a gout-rest and, as if to show the extent of his troubles, the other foot, happily free from the disease, rested idly in a neat shoe and black silk stocking. The doctor was proud of his feet, for they were narrow and shapely with arched insteps and beautiful toes ; but while his eye rested on the whole member, his mind's eye sadly reflected the distorted and swollen extremity that, from its hidden nest in the wool, shot dreadful stabs of pain.

" Go forth into the garden, Honorine," said he, " and cull herb gerrard. You know it of old, and I beg you dig good store of roots, that I may drink deep to my Lady Podagra. She was with me last night when the last red ember died in the fire, and I saw her dreadful shadow, steely green eyes and cruel mouth, ere she bent down to kiss my foot. Her kiss is the quintessence of human agony, for she is the Lady of Pain, and though it is well for poor humanity to do suit and service in her courts, yet no doubt we can better estimate the value of her discipline after its infliction, than while we writhe and pant under it."

" You are a hero," said Honorine, " and your fortitude is a lesson to us all."

" As for the gout-weed," he answered, " you'll find enough and to spare, for Tom Otter, shining light as he is in many matters, burns but dimly in the garden patch.

Horticulture to him is a vain pursuit, and he would rather ride over a wheat field than plough it. Podagra's herb is a low thing of the order umbellifer with bright green foliage and white flowers. A pest in a flower-knot, but a boon in a sick-room when concocted with understanding. Culpeper, though I think the rogue wrote with his tongue in his cheek too often, has great wisdom in herbs of the field, and of gout-weed he sayeth that Saturn rules it and that the plant is very effectual in sciatica, gout, joint aches and other cold griefs. But for my part I hold gout a hot grief, a fiery hot, nay, a hell-hot grief. It is as though screws, ten times heated in the furnace, were being driven into your bones by a clumsy operative who continually slipped the driver."

Honorine obeyed him, dug the fresh roots where the weed flourished, and assisted her uncle to make a decoction.

"Budd is a good physician," admitted the vicar, "but something too conservative for so young a man. Now, unlike this herb gerrard, colchicum, to which he pins his entire faith, is a fair thing in a garden, but not so fair in the stomach of the lord of creation. I find it still the action of my heart and induce an amount of depression and pessimism of outlook that is much to be deplored in a servant of Christ. That a vile weed should over-crowd the spirit of man and have power to threaten his religious faith—what could be more shocking? Moreover, Budd errs in a fanatic hatred of strong drink, and when the spirit craveth most a little wine to hearten the stricken blood and lighten the pestilential humours of the disease, he banishes the bottle and advocates pints and pints of spring water—a very good drink for a fish, or a fowl, but not for an elderly doctor of divinity."

When stricken in this fashion the good man always ordered two books from his library. For lighter reading he chose Izaac Walton and fished by proxy; and when in a mind to turn upon more serious things, he studied Boethius, his Consolation of Philosophy. The latter work, in good folio, was open before him during the third day of his malady, when there came callers to the vicarage, and Honorine ran in to inquire if he felt well enough

to see Sir Simeon Glanvil and his daughters. The thought of friends was welcome, and he begged that they would visit him in his study.

"This is ill news," said the baronet. "And the first I had heard of your indisposition, otherwise I should have come sooner."

"Then you were not at church on Sunday, Sir Simeon, for had you been, you would have found a stranger in the pulpit. A young, devout clerk from Torquay, but something long-winded, dreary and barren—such as would fulfil Fuller's fear and make the church a cemetarium, wherein the living sleep above ground as soundly as the dead beneath. However, he did his best. How bonny Selina looks, and the spring roses are blooming before their time in the cheeks of Jennie!"

"About two great matters I am here, my friend, and it behoves you to make good and quick recovery," said his visitor. "My lady and I desire to marry in the month of May, and you know it is our wish that you tie the knot. But May is still far off. The other business must challenge your earliest attentions, and indeed, I know that you feel as I do concerning it."

"The Death Coach, Doctor Baldwin," explained Selina Glanvil. "The dreadful vision has been seen yet again; and by your own man. Tom Otter, about some rabbit netting on the cliffs after dark, swears most stoutly that he saw the great hearse with black horses, nodding plumes and all."

"He does," returned the doctor, "yet Tom's veracity on matters that fall out after dark is not his strong point. Sidebottom too, of *The Sailors' Joy*, a good sportsman and an honest man, has solemnly attested that riding back from a distant meet, he perceived a vapour, or as it had been a shadow, steal from Hordell's Hall, pass between the old gate-posts and vanish. It may have been a breath of some sea mist; or it may have been indeed a spectrum; but he saw enough to make a rhyme about, for I have read it. We must remember he is a poet and easily lifted out of sober reason, as is the nature of such gifted creatures; yet I grant that it is full time our Mother Church dealt with these sad spirits if such there

be, and with or without bell, book and candle, they shall presently be put to rest."

Then Doctor Baldwin laid his hand on the open volume before him.

"But for the moment by Boethius, and not by me shall you be answered, my honoured friend," he continues. "Let us then learn what reply he can give you."

The invalid now put on his spectacles, which had been removed to mark the page when his friends arrived, and read these words—

"The carrying out of any human action depends upon two things—to wit, will and power. If either be wanting, nothing can be accomplished. For if the will be lacking, no attempt at all is made to do what is not willed; whereas if there be no power, the will is all in vain."

Then he took off his glasses, shut his book and made as though to preach a sermon on this text.

A sermon, however, was not delivered.

"That my will in this matter is inflexible, you know. I have indeed devoted much time and attention to our ghosts. The ritual of such a service is familiar to me, the necessary prayers and exhortation are already committed to memory. And, what will surprise you, since these high affairs cannot be undertaken without the assistance of a prince of the church, when last in Exeter I sought the Bishop, that I might procure from him licence for the exorcism. I narrated the events of last week in the harbour, which filled his lordship with wonder and admiration, and which, incidentally, gave me this attack of gout; and I then described our Death Coach and expressed our very reasonable desire that steps should be taken to liberate these unhappy ones and bring them rest, and Daleham relief from their unwelcome society."

Sir Simeon was much impressed.

"Must indeed the prelate of the see be summoned on such an errand?" he inquired.

"It is so," answered Doctor Baldwin, "though the great man appeared not himself to be aware of the fact.

The Dean, however, was of our company and, needless to say, knew all about it. There is no more learned divine than he—in this county or another. The Bishop for his part suspected that our church had abjured certain branches of her ancient power, on grounds of perversion and abuse; but we soon convinced him that, in this matter, it was not so."

"He is hard to convince, however," declared Sir Simeon.

"Not against testimony," announced the doctor. "The testimony was with us, for the seventy-second of the canons, ratified and enjoined on the clergy in the year of our Lord 1604, is very positive and direct. It expressly provides that 'No minister, unless he hath the license of his diocesan Bishop, shall essay to exorcise a spirit, evil or good.' Now nothing can be more explicit, and it proved that I was in my right to demand lawful privilege for the enterprise under his lordship's hand and seal."

"He gave it?" asked Sir Simeon.

"He gave it. He called his secretary to him and the faculty was drawn without delay. I was called to disburse certain moneys, for Mother Church is well aware that the labourer is worthy of his hire, and then the good Bishop did himself append his signature, under the sigillum of the see. The document lies in yonder desk—an interesting survival for this age. I think to the last his lordship felt a little unhappy. 'Let it be a secret,' he said, as he shook my hand, 'for there are many weak brethren amongst us, Doctor Baldwin, many weak brethren!'"

The baronet felt a little shocked at this worldly caution.

"And shall we dread the weak brethren?" he asked. "Is a bishop to help good men in a worthy undertaking with fear and trembling, because there are weak brethren and those of little faith in the land? Let it be our business to establish the weak and make them strong, by displaying the Lord's doings before them."

The doctor beamed at these sentiments and applauded heartily.

: "I think as you do, and am exceedingly anxious to

proceed upon my solemn duty. These spectral masqueraders, who are alleged to mimic their old-time doings in the flesh, must certainly be banished to that limbo, where the departed await their last reckoning with the Creator. My will is active as you see ; only my power for the moment is arrested. Let me first cast forth Tarda Podagra from this right foot, and then we will proceed to a greater exorcism."

"And you will marry papa ?" said Jennie.

"It is a privilege I would unwillingly surrender to the primate of all England," he answered.

They left him, well pleased, and Honorine walked to the entrance with the visitors. She longed to impart some of her secret difficulties to Jennie and Selina, but for the present the secret of her brother's return had been scrupulously kept, and none was supposed to know it, save Oxenham, her mother and herself. Faith, of course, also knew, and it was largely thanks to her that supplies reached poor Paul, for, under pretence of comforts for Mrs. Tresilion, all manner of good things went to her cottage and then by night reached the invalid. A time was fast approaching, however, when further aid would be necessary to bring the prisoner from his hiding-place. It was no den for a crippled man to live in, and his health began to suffer. Honorine could not solve the problem of how to bring him safely off ; but she believed that once away from Hordell's Hall, a fitting temporary home might be found. Indeed, she knew where her brother would be very welcome. Her idea involved not Sir Simeon Glanvil, but his daughters ; and Gilbert Oxenham, who was about to leave Tudor Towers, supported her strongly. As yet, however, neither had spoken, though Honorine longed to do so.

Others were also employed upon the problem of Paul's safety, and Honorine pinned her faith to one. It was not Gilbert who would cut the knot, nor yet Paul : indeed the sick man's mind wandered sometimes, and he was in no case to help himself. But to Faith she looked, and she was in the right, for her friend presently suggested a way. The scheme promised to be perilous, but the circumstances grew urgent, and risks had to be incurred.

Though subtle, the character of Faith Tresilion was not complex. She was amazingly brave, and knew not fear, she was also quick-witted and possessed full share of female intuition during these stormy and changeful seasons of her life : but upon some subjects she had made up her mind from childhood, and the accident of love could not change it. When her mother said that the Tresilions were like bees, and that the good of the hive was the good of each and all, she spoke truly, and Faith, now that her lover desired entrance to the hive, took it for granted that his interests would merge with her own. So, at least, she had supposed at first and even now, despite her better knowledge of his character, it did not occur to her, that Robert Pawlet, far from desiring entrance to her family, wished rather to take her out of it. She loved her fierce old mother and her brother, as she had loved her father during his lifetime. She felt vitally identified with them, and the thought of breaking that close union would have been resented bitterly by her warm and faithful heart. The Tresilion blood ran in her veins, and she would be none the less a Tresilion after her marriage. She had first assured herself that, whatever might be her activities elsewhere, his own wife's brother might count on Robert not to interfere with him. But now she knew differently. Therefore, after certain very definite and clear expressions of opinion from her lover, she had raised the question no more, while secretly taking another side than his. It grieved her to do so ; but her nature could not lead her otherwise, and the Tresilion conscience assured her that she did no wrong.

The lovers had come very close together since the adventure of the lighthouse, and Pawlet was never weary of describing her extraordinary physical courage on that memorable night. But upon their splendid affection had been rudely thrust the meeting between Newte and the exciseman, and at the very next occasion of a lover's walk with Robert, Faith perceived that he was troubled

" 'Tis because you can't catch those devils who went to the lighthouse that you fret," she said. " But feel no fear ; you'll have 'em in klink afore the blooth be on the apple trees."

The accident of his private discomfort fell at an awkward hour, for Faith was bent on asking a favour, and he found himself, thanks to his secret knowledge, in a false position. He had anticipated some such catastrophe, however, and was not unprepared. He understood Faith's fiery love for Nicholas and judged that her love for himself, albeit deep as any man need desire, could not even now be trusted to prove stronger than the instinct of race, which was a ruling passion with her. He and she had looked into the eyes of death together, and for him, he knew that she would lay down her life, if occasion arose; but she felt no less for her own kindred.

Now the collision occurred, on a still night toward the end of March when they walked together by the coast-guard path above the sea and marked the homeward-bound trawlers, like silhouettes, passing in dark procession through the silver flung by moonlight upon the bay.

He did not answer her last remark, and she seemed to guess that his thoughts were not with the unknown ruffians, but with her brother.

"Nick should be home afore long now," she said. "Mother and me are only half alive without him. Though I've got you now. But he's a rare good brother and a rare good son. 'Tis well for me and mother to know how friendly you men are."

Still he was silent, while she praised Nicholas. His duty had to be done, no matter what the consequences might be; and as she talked, he knew only too surely what they must be. He continued dumb, but she challenged him again.

"You'll go your way and he'll go his, and each think the world of the other, and each mind his own business—eh, Bobby?"

"Pray God our ways don't meet then," he said, "for we don't see eye to eye in some things and never shall. I hate a lie worse than the Father of Lies. And there can't be no lasting respect and friendship between the man who lies and breaks the law and me. I can't change in that, Faith—no, not even for you. I'm here to put down smuggling once and for all, and if I haven't done it a'-

ready, I'm very soon going to do it. I'm going to settle with these water-rats so sure as my name's Pawlet, and so sure as you are my precious sweetheart. And Nick knows it very well. I've told him my view and my purpose. 'Tis fair fighting so far as I'm concerned. I like him well—no man better. He's brave as a lion and straight and upright and honourable in every thing but this cursed 'free trading'; but his view there be utterly false and wrong; and over that I won't budge an inch, and if I catch him at it, I'll have him in prison and his boat burnt, or broken up. And I shall catch him as sure as he's born—don't feel no doubt about that."

"No, you won't, you darling man," she said. "You're a wonder and my pride and joy always; but you may take it from me you'll never catch our Nicholas. He's cleverer than you are on the water, Bobby, though you be a deal smarter than him on shore."

"'Tis on shore he'll have to reckon with me," answered Pawlet; "and we'd better leave it at that."

But she would not.

"How can I? This is ill news for me, and cruel news to hear you speak so. No woman ever loved her lover better than I love you, and well you know it; but I love my bedridden mother and my brother too. And their enemy, if they've got one, be my enemy; and their friends are my friends. But I say you'll never catch him in no crooked deed, for he's never done a crooked deed in his life, and when it comes to opinions, his opinions be just as well worth considering as yours, my darling dear!"

They changed the subject, but Robert Pawlet could not change his mood. She rallied him, coaxed him, petted him and then, just as she had succeeded in raising his spirits and lifting his heavy heart a trifle, cast it down again into the depths. Unconsciously she did so, but the favour she now craved told the exciseman far more than she dreamed. It declared only too distinctly that Faith knew all about her brother's expedition and was just as well aware as Pawlet himself, that Nicholas was in France and not at the Scillies; while, on the other hand, his answer to her petition immediately awoke suspicions in the girl's mind.

" Friday week's Plympton Fair day and I want for you to take me, Bob. We've had some pretty bad times together, but never a real right down bit of fun. You must hire Mr. Sidebottom's gig and drive me yourself. A whole day, mind—and dancing in the evening! I'm set on it heart and soul and won't take 'no' for an answer."

She named the date on which her brother was to run his cargo, and she hoped that while she and her sweetheart were amusing themselves far away, Nicholas and his crew would find the coast clear and come in safely at Elijah Newte's signal.

But it fell otherwise.

" I'm greatly put about to deny you," said the man. " But the time for revels is not yet for me. I must bide close to my work for many a long night and day yet I reckon."

She strove fiercely with him to make him do her will—so fiercely indeed that suspicion grew to certainty in his mind. There could be no doubt that she sought to remove him from Daleham on the night of her brother's return. Nor did he blame her, knowing her. But he felt unutterably cast down at one aspect of her action, for it was clear that she set her brother's fortunes higher than her future husband's, that she cared not what cloud might rest on the exciseman, so that the smuggler succeeded. It was, of course, natural that Faith should know all particulars and it was natural that she should want to ensure her brother's success, so far as a sister might ; but it was cruelly unnatural that she should be willing thus completely to sacrifice her lover's position, reputation and future prospects to another's prosperity. So at least thought Robert Pawlet.

He refused somewhat harshly at last to fall in with her wish for a holiday, and he did it in such a way that the girl could not but feel a cold shiver strike her heart. He was indeed very careful not to suggest the date involved would find him especially occupied ; but Faith guessed that he must suspect, if he did not actually know. The fencing continued between them, and on her side she took good care not to let Robert Pawlet guess that she began to be in fear of the future.

" If you won't, you won't, though 'tis obstinate and none too kind of you. Then I'll beg Nicholas to take me, for he's sure to be home from the Scilly Isles afore that, though 'tis poor speed axing a brother to do what a lover ought. I forgive you, Bobby, though I'm mighty vexed to see you can set this hateful man-hunting against the first favour that ever I asked. I'll give you a week to think better of it. For who's hurt when all's said? You needn't even tell your mates that you be going; you can just slip off in the day behind their backs and leave them to do their duty as usual."

But he declared that any such enterprise might cost him his place.

" At best 'twould mean a bitter conscience and a shamed heart," he said relenting. " So don't you plead no more, my pretty joy, for very well you know how it hurts your man to say 'no' to them wonderful eyes."

She pouted, but she could say no more without exhibiting too great an interest in his movements. She was contented to display very genuine chagrin and disappointment at his decision, and soon afterwards, finding her mind overburdened with the heavy problems thrown upon it, she desired to leave her lover and consider the situation now developed between him and Nicholas. She meant to be impartial and pursue the subject without bias, and therefore she bade Pawlet be gone.

" You're not gracious to-night and I'd liefer you left me," she said, and then when Mr. Pawlet had slowly departed in deep sorrow, she called him back, kissed him and made it up as handsomely as she knew how.

" I won't quarrel with my own bird—though whether 'tis for your sake or another's who can tell?" she said. " Now go, for I'm sore puzzled to-night. Two puzzles I've got boring my brains like a pair of gimlets; and the trouble is you can't help me with either—because you're such a terrible good, high-minded man!"

He departed then, bewildered at what was nothing but the truth, though it fell ironical and strange upon his ear, coming from Faith; and she, when he was gone, sat down at cliff edge and marked the twinkle of the lights where Daleham clustered by the sea, and the beam of the

beacon beyond. That spectacle turned her thoughts tenderly on her betrothed, as it ever did now ; but she was in truth concerned not only with him and Nicholas, but also with Paul Deschamps, pining in his dreary, underground prison. From the moon she sought solutions, but they were long in coming. Her problems seemed at first sight insoluble, yet her mind revelled in the tremendous difficulties life presented. She was young, strong, active and full of a superabundant vitality that said "yea" to life with hearty appetite, whatever it might bring, whatever challenge it might throw down. She did not despair of a way from these difficulties, though at best there could offer no easy or certain road in either case. She dared not stand between her lover and his duty, because to do so was to lose him ; he would not sacrifice his honour even for her, and she knew it ; while on the other side, she was very fully determined that Nicholas should not come into collision with Robert to her brother's ruin, if wit of woman could prevent it. Her second task was to bring Deschamps safely off and run the gauntlet of the soldiers and possible secret spies that meant him mischief.

The moon was far west of south and Faith had grown very cold and weary before she saw any sort of way through these mazes. Then, indeed, a solution to each difficulty presented itself, though she welcomed neither with great rejoicing.

"As for the poor young gentleman," thought she, "'tis neck or nothing, but it might serve very clever given the needful help ; but t'other—Nick and my Bobby—please God I'll hit on something wittier for them yet afore the time comes. 'Tis a cruel thing if I did that, and Lord knows what might come of it. Yet there's Nicholas, and to think of him in trouble's not to be borne ; and if Bobby be so honest that even in that quarter—well, 'tis tearing fine and grand and high and mighty and religious of him ; but it do look to me as if he might have to pay a terrible long price for being such a hero. But then heroes are used to that. I love him with every drop of blood in my body and he crowns my life like the moonlight crowns the sea ; but he ain't a very reasonable dear—in fact a bit

rash and wilful you might say ; and to be such a pillar of the State just where Nick's concerned—'tisn't exactly decent in my eyes, and I won't have it. I can't suffer it, for he mustn't be allowed to bring sorrow on me and mine —nor yet sorrow on himself. A pretty poor start for married life 'twould be to begin housekeeping under my own mother's cuss ! ”

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE DEATH COACH

COINCIDENCE now fixed on the same night for three very decisive and different adventures. Four days after Doctor Baldwin's recovery from gout, he prepared to undertake the solemn business of exorcising the Hordell spirits. On the identical night Elijah Newte, who had come to an understanding with Warner Baldwin, promised to lead Sergeant Bulstrode to the hiding-place of the fugitive; while as though that were not sufficient for one crowded nocturnal hour, it was at the same time that the friends of Paul Deschamps had determined to assist his escape.

One circumstance prompted their decision and this was the fact that Sir Simeon Glanvil would be from home. He had ever regarded the military hunt for Paul with a doubtful eye. He loved the young man's mother and sister, but felt uncertain of him, and when therefore a guard appeared to arrest the youth, he feared that the nephew of Doctor Baldwin had earned this dishonour and withheld his sympathy.

But now he was at Exeter and Honorine had seized the occasion to win Jennie and Selina to her will. They entered heart and soul into the project and a place was already prepared for Paul, where none would find him but his friends. Here, then, was one enterprise planned for this night, and Doctor Baldwin, taking his Bishop's advice rather than Sir Simeon's, had determined on the same occasion to seek the theatre of the alleged ghostly visitations, and proceed according to the proper order. But he kept the matter exceedingly quiet and only confided his purpose to two men, for he held it quite out of the question that any woman should be present,

nor did he wish that news of his proceedings should leak abroad until after they were ended. He told Henry Sidebottom, in his official capacity of vicar's churchwarden, and he told Tom Otter, under seal of secrecy. The twain were to meet him half an hour after midnight and accompany him to the scene of the service ; but he intended no other members of his congregation to be present.

Lastly, the same time had been fixed for Newte to meet the soldiers and reveal the hiding-place of Deschamps. True to his principle, Warner Baldwin did not design to be present at the capture of his cousin ; but Newte had no such compunction. Only he could thread the labyrinth and lay bare the secret in the midst of it. Moreover he stood to earn a handsome reward for his services.

It is to be noted that not one of the three parties busy on this night was conscious of the others. All worked in secret, and each was exceedingly anxious to challenge no public attention for its operations.

Yet that all three must meet after midnight on the occasion of their strange activities was inevitable and the nature of their extraordinary collision is now to be set down.

The night found each party astir long before the hour appointed. Indeed but for an accident Faith's plot for Deschamps had been unguessed and the elaboration of it in a measure wasted ; but the movements of Paul's friends were delayed ; and as a result they produced a terrific though wholly uncalculated effect.

Cast into a very grave mood by the nature of their task, Doctor Baldwin, Henry Sidebottom and Tom Otter set forth at the hour appointed by theological authority. Mr. Otter carried a lantern and a big stick ; the doctor bore his bag containing vestments and his books ; while their companion, who had a brace of pistols in his pocket for his own comfort, but did not mention them, related how on an occasion now past, he had actually seen something to be described as a phantom hearse and horse emerge from the ruined gateway of Hordell's Hall.

" Its shape I couldn't swear to, for the night was ill lighted," said Mr. Sidebottom ; " but undoubtedly it was no natural thing—a wishtness you may say ; and behind the Death Coach I could very near swear there walked a figure, though whether angel or demon I know not."

" Nigh the ruined gates will we stand then," answered Doctor Baldwin, " while I pursue the solemn order of ministration. It is said that the service of exorcism usually provokes no manifestation in the course of its progress ; but that is no sign that we need be dis couraged. Though we see not the shadows, be sure they will both hear and feel our presence."

" I hope we shan't see 'em," declared Tom Otter, " for though your Reverence and Mr. Sidebottom will bear me out that I fear nothing that's made of flesh and blood, whether it goeth on two legs or four, with ghosts 'tis a very different matter and I pray we shan't be called to view nothing of the sort, for 'tis any odds I drop the lantern and run home to my wife if such a thing was to happen."

The doctor rated him for cowardice and irreverence ; then turning to his churchwarden spoke of parochial matters.

" It has been said by a wiser man than you or I, Henry, that the preaching of the word in some places is like the planting of a wood ; where, though no profit is received for full twenty years together, it cometh afterwards. I trust it may be so with us, for frankly I look rather to the younger generation of Daleham than the elder."

" Well may you say so, your Reverence, but let not that late dreadful incident lead you to mistrust us all," answered the other. " It is true that a little leaven leavens the lump and that the unutterable scoundrel, Abednego Egg, was a power of evil, with his black witchery and charms and incantations ; but his end has been a fearful lesson to young and old. He was plucked off at the very moment of his master crime, and the vengeance of God needed not your great sermon on the subject to drive it home."

"I had hoped my words might have led the other scoundrels to proclaim themselves out of their guilty consciences," said the vicar ; but Tom Otter explained very simply the reason that prevented such a confession.

"No doubt they'd have done it, your Reverence, willy nilly and been drawn forth to be the mark and butt of Daleham afore they was dragged to the gallows ; but a very good reason held against it, and that was they weren't there. Be sure such as them don't go to church, any more than the devil cleans his teeth with holy water."

They were now come to the lonely theatre of their pilgrimage and they had scarcely reasoned it before Otter suffered from his first panic.

"Saints protect us!" he said, "look—look—this is no place for us. There's not one ghostey but a score on the move, and they've got corpse-candles tied to the end of their tails as sure as I'm Tom Otter—a good Christian, and man-of-all-work to his Reverence!"

Figures there were indeed among the trees at the gateway of Hordell's Hall, half a mile from the ruin itself ; and lights certainly shone among them ; but lights and forms were both motionless and twenty men stood in a row at attention, while one walked up and down before them.

Dr. Baldwin approached and was challenged.

"Who goes there—Elijah Newte?" asked Sergeant Bulstrode, whereupon the doctor answered.

"A greater than Elijah Newte, soldier, and one upon a greater errand than can fall to him. What do you here and these men drawn up in array?"

"Our business is private, reverend sir," answered the soldier. "But the morning light will announce it. And for you and your party, I must forbid your entrance here until our work is done, hoping that you'll pardon a liberty taken only in the name of the King."

"I too serve a King and a greater King than thine," answered the old man. "Think not that I speak in disrespect of our earthly monarch, when I exalt the King of Heaven. But we do not seek to go further. Indeed our business is here, and I must bid you and your

men come forth. Otherwise, standing where now you stand, in the very path of these supernatural presences, it might happen that it would go ill with you ; for we know that under exorcism evil spirits are often unruly and mark their anger with violence."

Sergeant Bulstrode, who was a religious man, made no question about obedience. Indeed he shared not a little the tremor that ran through his company when they heard of this dark business. Superstition was very rife a hundred years ago, and where the educated did not hesitate literally to believe, it followed naturally enough that the ignorant did the like, adding to their credulity an active element of terror. Even yet dread of the unseen is a common failing amid the older generation of the folk ; but of old few felt it not, or were proof against its gloomy attack and searching influence. When a learned and holy man thus spoke, it followed that all were prepared to listen, and soon the soldiers had been marched to a little knoll some thirty yards from the entrance of Hordell's Hall. Here they made a congregation for the approaching service, and at heart neither Tom Otter nor Mr. Sidebottom regretted their presence ; but they knew not how many craven hearts were beating under the red coats of the company.

The night was dark yet starry and a sad wind whispered in the mass of Hordell's wood where its ancient and storm-beaten legion hove up against the sky. An owl shouted there and another answered him. Then came Elijah Newte and, learning of the matter in hand, fell in therewith, though neither fear nor reverence filled his heart. The service was not destined to occupy more than fifteen minutes, so Doctor Baldwin explained, and after that, those thus mysteriously assembled might go about their business.

Then the doctor opened his bag and slipped a black gown and a scarlet stole over the thick coat that he wore. For his wideawake, he substituted his college cap, as more befitting ceremonial and he also drew on a pair of white gloves. Otter held the lamp to the book ; Mr. Sidebottom controlled a little silver bell and the troops stood calm and silent in the rear.

Doctor Baldwin then took his book, but before opening the service of exorcism, he spoke a few words for the benefit of those who attended him.

"I had not expected a congregation at this solemnity," he said ; "yet since you are present, it is desirable that you should know what it is that we do at dead of night with such ritual and appearance of mystery. We are here, my friends, to succour the spirits of the departed and by our active ministrations on their behalf to release them from the necessity of assembling here any more. Hither they come too frequently by night and play a tragedy, which neither redounds to their own credit nor increases human respect for the world where spirits roam freed from their earthly clay. Of old, Hordell's Hall was the abode of the great, and they passed at their appointed hours and went the way of all flesh. But for reasons hidden from our mortal knowledge and understanding, there is permitted a spectral repetition of some funeral of the past. People have declared that they have actually witnessed this black phantasmagoria, and while singly the assertion of any individual might be questioned in such a supernatural event, it would seem more than one—nay half a dozen—share the experience, and we must cease to treat their testimony with indifference. I now design to pray to the Father of all created things—of all manifestations, whether of matter or spirit—to the Father, not only of Lights, but of Forces and of Sounds—to Him Who hangs the stars in their places and marks the invisible pathway of the wind and the meeting-place of the thunder-clouds. I shall pray to Him that He will remember these mournful and venerable wraiths, His children, even as we are ; that He will suffer their futile activities to cease from this lonely headland ; and give them peace, not only for their own sakes, but for the credit and repute of those who are still in the land of the living."

It sounded like a prayer and the soldiers by a common instinct, said "Amen."

Doctor Baldwin now opened his book, placed a gold ring over the forefinger of the right hand glove which he wore and proceeded very solemnly and slowly with

the service of exorcism. Once launched upon the matter, he loved it and made much of it. But others it seemed beside the attentive soldiers were to listen to the service, for suddenly, as if by magic, from between the gate posts of the old estate, just as the faint and distant bell of Daleham church clock tolled two, silent as a dream and blacker than the night itself, a gloomy pageant crept from the wood and passed within thirty yards of the watchers. One tall figure, above man's stature moved in front, and following it came two horses, under heavy trappings that swept to the earth about them. On their heads were plumes and they drew a plumed hearse. A dark figure drove them and the brief procession was completed by one more figure who stalked behind. Not a sound they made, but a noise like the shudder of the wind in a winter hedge ran through Sergeant Bulstrode's company and Mr. Tom Otter fell on his knees and called upon God to forgive him his sins. The innkeeper, however, feared not; he took the fallen lantern and held it to Doctor Baldwin's book, while the clergyman, for a moment struck dumb by this sudden response to his efforts, could not immediately proceed.

But Bulstrode did not fear.

"Give it to 'em! Give it to 'em, your holiness!" cried the sergeant. "Don't let 'em slip by afore they've got a slice of the book. Oh, my dear soul, let 'em have it hot and strong afore they be off! Fire a broadside—fire a broadside into 'em, your honour!"

The doctor obeyed and lifted his voice; but the Death Coach did not stop. It proceeded at an even pace and the spectres about it appeared to be wholly ignorant of the living assembled so near them. One horse tossed his head; then without haste the apparition passed and faded away or was swallowed up in the night. It seemed as though earth had taken her unquiet children back to her bosom, and indeed the vicar drew cheerful augury from the fact that the familiar apparition had actually appeared in response to his prayers.

He made an end of the business, blessed those present and bade all men take courage and take faith.

"It wanted only this revelation to crown our nightly

act of grace and reward us fitly," he said. "Let no man fear, or feel his heart beating at his ribs any longer. I derive the utmost consolation and support from this overwhelming event. For surely it speaks with trumpet tongue and proclaims that we have been engaged on no mistaken errand. The spirits were summoned from their secret haunt and home by the words that I spoke. Irresistibly they were drawn forth—the simulacra of their hearse and coffin and the manes of themselves and their steeds. Our eyes have seen them; we have testified to the truth of uneasy rumour. They are come and gone—aye, they are gone, never to return, my friends, never to return! Their perturbed spirits have entered the way of peace. Be assured that they have found it and that none among the living will ever see the Death Coach of Hordell's Hall again!"

"Amen"! repeated Sergeant Bulstrode's force, and Mr. Sidebottom assisted the vicar out of his robes. Then, by a sort of reaction, the excited company, who identified the doctor and the doctor only with this singular experience, felt called upon to acknowledge his achievement in the only possible way to them. The inspiration was the sergeant's.

"We ain't no talkers, your Reverence," he said, "but we've all got the little sense God gave us; and the biggest fool among us won't forget this night; nor yet these here bogies you've sent about their business in such holy language; and so we give you three good uns, which is the best we can do; and I hope you'll take 'em as they're meant; if you don't, we can't help it."

He led three cheers for Doctor Baldwin, and they were given heartily enough. Yet when the doctor had gone homeward with Otter and Sidebottom (the latter already deep in cogitation of another poem), some among Sergeant Bulstrode's company found their nerves in renewed ferment and one or two feared to enter the dark wood, where their way extended to the Hall.

But of these poltroons Newte was not one. He accepted the incidents of life as they fell to his share and struck his observation. He believed with the rest that he had seen spirits; but he also believed with

Doctor Baldwin that these creatures of another world than his, were now definitely despatched to their rest. He had trembled at the sight of them, but now they were sped, he trembled no more. His natural brutality asserted itself and he bade Bulstrode hasten.

"We'll wake our bird out of his beauty sleep," he said. "He's alone of nights. But you can only get to him one by one, for the way in would beat an eel if it didn't know the secret; and as his cousin tells me he's got a broken leg, no doubt you'll have to pull down a bit of solid wall afore you can fetch him out."

Preparations for a night march to Plymouth were already made, but this information respecting their prisoner's condition came as a surprise to the sergeant. He despatched a couple of men back to Daleham for a military waggon that had accompanied his force and now awaited their return at the village.

"Fetch it up and be as quick as you can about it," he said. Then, under Newte's guidance, the soldiers proceeded to effect their capture. Not until actually at the spot from which a tortuous descent was made to the cellar, did any among them ever suspect a truth, long ago transparent to the unsuperstitious on-looker. Then Elijah found that the wall he designed to attack had been demolished already and an easy, if steep and winding passage way opened. At the same time by lantern light others had made a further discovery. The ground was trampled and there were evidences of very recent activities. A pail of tar with a brush in it, a broken board or two, a pile of shavings, a crowbar, evidently used to break down the wall, some pieces of flannel and other fragments all indicated the nature of the recent hoax.

Newte was the first to perceive what had happened.

"They've got him off under our damn fool noses!" he shouted. "Death and the devil! Wasn't there one man of all this sheep-faced crowd with sense enough to see what was up? They tinkered a hearse somehow and stuck shavings dipped in tar atop for plumes and wrapped wheels and hooves in flannel and stuck this tarnation Frenchman in the coffin! He's gone—he's

done you—and half way to Plymouth or Exeter afore now!"

They held their lanterns on high, and penetrated the ruin; then Sergeant Bulstrode, with Elijah for guide, reached the cellar itself. But the place was empty, though Paul's truckle bed still stood in the corner with the blankets that had been brought and other comforts to render his imprisonment bearable. For ten days he had hidden here, but now he was gone indeed and Mr. Newte had very correctly described the manner of his removal.

Little dreaming of the incident that would attend Paul's triumphant departure, Faith had planned a burlesque of the familiar death-coach, so that if any chance beholder should witness it, he would suppose that he saw the famous apparition of Hordell's Head. That the sham ghosts might have to run the gauntlet of a soldier's picket, or Robert Pawlet, or one of his men, was likely enough. For this reason she had taken every precaution and been fertile of inventions which Mr. Cawdle and Gilbert Oxenham carried out very effectively; but that the pretended hearse and its supporters would proceed from Hordell's straight into Doctor Baldwin's exorcism and the whole of Sergeant Bulstrode's force, none guessed. The strain was severe and if those who beheld them were astonished, their amazement was nothing to that of Faith and her accomplices. She herself drove the horses, while Oxenham walked ahead, under a black mantle which he lifted above him, and Mr. Cawdle came behind. All kept a steady nerve under the ordeal, and the driver, restraining a natural instinct to whip up her black steeds and bolt, made no haste until the assembled company was left behind and the success of her ruse complete.

Then indeed the horses were stripped of their flowing draperies, Faith descended and left the party, Cawdle took the reins and Oxenham crept in beside Deschamps, who now sat up in his pretended coffin. Then at a swift gallop though still silent enough by reason of their muffled hoofs and wheels, they sped away.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE SPANISH KNIFE

NOW it came about that with bitter regret but determined purpose, Robert Pawlet set forth to frustrate Nicholas Tresilion, defeat his hopes of fortune, capture his contraband and his boat and take prisoner the man himself and his accomplices.

That this was her lover's intention Faith felt no manner of doubt, but the puzzles as to how Pawlet had winded the business in hand remained, and she was at a loss to know who had played her brother false. It seemed impossible to imagine that any who stood to win increased prosperity from the run should have gone over to the side of the Customs, yet there was none else who might by any possibility be suspected. The crew of *The Grey Bird*, together with Elijah Newte and Ned Cawdle of Appleby's Farm, her mother and herself—these were all who knew what was afoot, and of this company Cawdle was unquestionably staunch. There remained only Newte, and echoing her mother's invincible dislike of the man, remembering also the past, she felt that here must be the secret foe. Yet how treachery would pay him better than truth she could not see.

For a few hours this great matter had been thrust out of her mind by Paul Deschamps and his affairs, but now his safety was triumphantly secured. The truth leaked out and all Daleham laughed; yet one or two did not laugh, and Warner Baldwin, as well as Newte instituted a close and extended search for the rescued Paul. The soldiers too, let their annoyance be felt before they departed and the dwelling of Madame Deschamps had again been ransacked very thoroughly from roof to base-

ment. Nor was the vicarage exempt, and most people entertained no doubt at all that despite his assurance to the contrary, the Doctor Baldwin himself was in the hoax, and indeed, played the principal part. He denied it with all his might, yet did not hesitate openly to rejoice at the sequel and join in the laugh at himself.

The interview between this good man and Sergeant Bulstrode, when the latter arrived, empowered to search the vicarage, was exceedingly diverting, for the sergeant quite refused to believe that Doctor Baldwin knew nothing whatever of his nephew's whereabouts and did not hesitate to declare that he was much disappointed in the vicar.

Yet did Paul's uncle speak absolute truth, for his nephew's present position was hidden from him on purpose. Indeed Anna Deschamps herself did not know of it and only Oxenham, Honoreine, and the daughters of Sir Simeon Glanvil were aware of his hiding-place. He lay now snugly in an upper chamber of "Tudor Towers," where his sister and the other girls had awaited him on the night of his escape; and there, with an old woman to nurse him and the company of the maidens by day, with laughter in his ears and the light of spring sunshine in his eyes, he swiftly regained strength and heart.

Once Faith Tresilion came to see him, and upon the same day her own interests were suddenly and surprisingly advanced. An accident opened the way for her and the discovery to which it led banished at least one of the chief difficulties which still beset her path.

After leaving "Tudor Towers" on the occasion of her visit, she went to Hordell's, for Paul had lamented the loss of a knife—an ancient thing, the gift of Faith to him in the past. It was Spanish, a little curiosity that her father had received long ago from a Dago in his wanderings as a young man; and because Faith had given it to him, Deschamps was sad at its loss. His attitude indeed had vitally changed towards her and his love was transmuted to something very like veneration. She had done very much for the man and he was not the one to forget or undervalue. During his

durance at the Head, she had often sat with him and they had talked their hearts out, so that no shadow of misunderstanding remained. He was contrite and his chastened spirit pleaded often for her forgiveness, while she, too, blamed herself for the old friendship and her soul, now awakened by real love, was quick to see how unconsciously she had deluded the enamoured youth.

When he mentioned the knife and regretted its loss, she remembered that she had taken it from him on one occasion when he was playing with it and put it aside in a projecting stone of the cellar wall above his couch.

"And there it is yet, I'll wager," said she, "for after their hunt, the soldiers never visited the place again and Newte was busy the very next night making good the broken wall. The cellar and tunnel may have to serve their purpose once and again yet, though I'm terrible afraid 'twill be as well known by this time, as the nest of a rook in a tree."

She went within the hour to Hordell's Hall and found that Newte had been as good as his word and restored the dilapidations necessary when Paul was conveyed away.

Faith forgot to bring a light and, therefore, felt her way round the cellar ; but she knew it well enough and had just found the projecting stone and the little knife upon it under her hand, when an unexpected sound made her stand still. There was none else in the cellar, but from far off came a hollow reverberation of human voices and she knew that men were either approaching or retreating by the passage which led away downward to the beach. The sound increased and her breath came fast, for two voices echoed against each other and both were well known to her. That the speakers should be together here was a pregnant circumstance throwing sinister light on the time to come. For Robert Pawlet was one of those at hand and Elijah Newte the other. Their speech came strange and billowy up through the passage ; their words rolled and echoed like far distant thunder, but she had no difficulty in distinguishing both voices. Moreover it was easy enough to guess why they were here. Her lover had already inspected the cellar—that she knew, for he had told her so

after passing attention was drawn to the Head on Paul's escape ; but she gathered that he had not yet probed the tunnel to the cliff and the descent to the beach, and now Newte had clearly laid these secrets bare for him.

The noise increased and the men approached. Her first thought was to fly and return the way that she had come, but then she hit on another plan and determined to remain unseen. To do so was easy enough, for the den contained many a hole and cranny. She pressed herself into a corner where the wall was broken, and crouched like a hare in its form. Under the circumstances there was certainly nothing to fear from discovery, while it might be possible by eavesdropping to learn the relations between her lover and the egregious Newte.

They came and their visit was of brief duration, but it served a purpose for the hidden watcher. The exciseman had not learned the secret of the hidden way hither until the present hour, and now he said so.

"To think I never found it !" he exclaimed, " and I've poked into that hole t'other end a score of times and reckoned the rocks that blocked it were natural."

" 'Twas a plan of John Tresilion's," answered Newte, " and come the night, his son will use it. But, so far as I can see you'll only be making work to take 'em up here. They'll bring all the cargo to the beach first and then run it aloft ; but if you're down below, you can drop on to 'em when the first load of stuff comes ashore, and then march 'em straight back to Daleham along the sands to the lock-up, and I can take the dinghy back to *The Grey Bird*, where she'll be lying close inshore, and bring her back to the harbour."

Pawlet did not answer and Newte spoke again.

"Her last cruise sure enough ! They break up every vessel new or old, caught at this game. She'll make a pretty pile of firewood. Old John will turn in his grave when he hears the ship-breaker's mallets on the foreshore."

Mr. Newte might have been astonished had he known how nearly a pair of woman's strong hands were suddenly fastening on his throat, but he did not guess at the

possibility of a listener and returned to the main subject with gusto.

" You be going to number twelve against their four. That's three to one ; and if you'll do the safest and surest thing, you'll come down to the Broken Rocks an hour after midnight and get comfortably stowed there out of sight and ready to welcome them. Then, when the four chaps land, out you jump. To wait for 'em up here would be a doubtful game, because by all accounts they're fetching a record haul and very like there will be more than they can carry up on one night. And if that's so, they'll hide it in the passage down under till another time and you'll watch this here mouse's hole for nothing. The beach is the place."

" Judas ! " said the other, but Newte denied it with anger.

" Don't you call me no names. I'm doing this for hate, not money. I'm doing this to be even with those that have treated me evil, and I'll stand no harsh word from you. I'm master in this matter, and if you hesitate to do your duty, now I've showed you the road to it, your fate will be on your own head."

The other did not answer, and that was all that Faith heard of them, for they proceeded out of the cellar, though not by the way they had come. She waited for a long while lest they should return, for it was vital that they should not guess that their conversation had been overheard. But neither came back and two hours later, when it was dark, she girl herself crept forth and hastened homewards. Little she had guessed when presenting the knife to Paul Deschamps how significantly it would some day bulk in the most vital affairs of her own life. Now she came out into the last light of evening and sped homeward as fast as she could go. Her original idea only needed this circumstance to quicken it. For a time she was staggered and stunned at her discovery, and found it in her greatly to wonder that such a man as Pawlet could sink to employ a mean and cowardly scoundrel in his affairs ; but soon her native energy reasserted itself, and she set to work, with all the powers of a swift and clear mind, to measure how her

discovery affected the nebulous plans already taking shape and substance in her thoughts. She was strung up now to any action, no matter how outrageous, for a hearty anger and loathing animated her against the betrayer, and she resolved that he, at least, should not be spared if she could bring him to punishment. With respect to her betrothed, it remained to be seen how he would act in the event of her success ; but her understanding of him led her to believe that failure would not kill his love. Yet how was it possible that he could fail ? She considered her own position, and cast about how to make it more powerful. As far as mere personal peril to Nicholas was concerned, she had the last word, and by lighting a red light instead of a blue one on the appointed night might warn him off the land, for Newte himself could not prevent that, and would in any case suppose that she intended to give the signal that all was clear ; but to do this was only to postpone the evil hour. Knowing the counter-plot, she could work effectively against Pawlet and warn both those afloat and Ned Cawdle ashore, that they were in peril ; but she had larger ideas than this. There had been from the first in her mind a notion of heroic proportions ; but even now she hesitated to put it into practice. To carry the war into the enemy's country and defeat Pawlet and Newte in their hour of triumph, was a reasonable and just ambition in Faith's opinion. But others were involved. A force of twelve would crush the force of four opposed to them, for Pawlet, leaving nothing to chance, intended to overmaster the smugglers by three to one. Here, then, lay her difficulty, for every man to be brought against her brother would be called to lose if she won. She desired to have a little army at her command, even as her lover had ; but that was impossible, and she had therefore to consider who among those ready and willing to befriend her could command such an army. She desired to defeat Pawlet and his men, not by warning Nicholas away, but by sweeping the exciseman and his forces out of the path of Nicholas. Where was the guile to procure the necessary force ? How could respectable people be found to interfere with

her lover and his men in the execution of their duty?

A way indeed presented itself, but, as we have said, her spirit quailed when she considered this enterprise and its far-reaching significance. For, given success, it involved so much and struck at so many.

She made an attempt to evade this extravagant idea, and strove yet again to see if by any possibility Pawlet could be made to waver.

Their wits clashed and he surprised her after she had angled to find if he would tell her what he knew. They spoke of Nicholas, and she pretended a very unusual doubt and fear concerning him.

"Sometimes I'm almost driven to think if he was catched and punished that it might be the saving of him and all of us," she said. "He may be wrong in his ideas, though he's always made us think that he was right, like father before him; but then, of course, mother and me are only women."

Mr. Pawlet had not laughed often of late; but he laughed now and looked into Faith's cloud-coloured eyes and kissed her very heartily.

"You and your mother be a great deal more than women in my opinion," he said. "You're an angel for one; and she—well, she's herself—the masterpiece of creation; and nobody knows it better than her. You're brave and you're clever and you're the light of my life; but you can't come it over your Bobby quite so easy as that. 'Tis too late to take that way now. You're a free trader yourself, to the marrow in your precious bones, and you've never pretended to be different, and when Nicholas and I meet in anger, if ever such a sad thing should happen, I know where your heart will be and where all your strength and wits will be. Perhaps you'll tell me next what Nicholas is up to and when he's going to France and when he's coming home again. And then, belike, you'll offer to lend me a hand against him and show me where and how to catch him! But I reckon I know the sort of help that me and my chaps would get from you!"

So he was cleverer than she, after all, in a good many particulars. She loved him the better for seeing through

her so swiftly. And then she abandoned her endeavours to glean his mind and approached him on different ground. That he would do his duty, regardless of all cost, she knew very well ; but now she tried to discover whether he wanted to do it.

Next time they went for a walk was but two days before the date fixed by Nicholas for his return, and Faith, her own plans defined, came to Robert in a mood very loving and put a case to him, that she might find out his personal view concerning the ugly task ahead of him.

He saved her some trouble and approached the matter now dominating his thoughts without any lead from her. Not that by hint or word he alluded to the event now so close at hand, but knowing his heart, she read between the lines of his utterance and perceived how in reality he had come to view the stern necessity ahead. His mood was changed since last they met, and there was no laughter in his heart or voice to-night. He wished Daleham at the bottom of the sea ; he protested at the hardness of having to do one's duty ; he was nevertheless very tender to his sweetheart, and prayed that nothing might ever come between them. He touched a delicate subject presently and argued as to the different quality of the love a girl must bear to her brother and her future husband. He even tried to make her admit that in the event of any clash between them, the brother ought to take second place. But she declined to commit herself to general assertions on the subject, saying that all would depend on the circumstances of such a quarrel.

"The lover might be right, and again he might be wrong," she said. "I couldn't tell how I'd feel about such a thing till it happened."

This saying somewhat cast him down ; and then on her side she strove to learn his secret attitude towards the work awaiting him, without for an instant hinting that she knew what that work must be. And in this quest she was successful, discovering what she hoped to discover.

"Suppose," said Faith, where she sat with his arm

round her and her dark head on his shoulder—"suppose, Bobby dear, that you reckoned a chap was doing wrong, and you had to catch him at it; and suppose you were in love with the chap's sister? 'Tis only a 'suppose,' and not like our case, because we all know Nicholas is not doing wrong, but catching mackerel; and even if he was smuggling, 'tis only a matter of opinion whether that would be doing wrong, and your side, though it's the strongest, is just as like to be mistook as t'other. But suppose 'twas different, and you loved a girl with all your heart and soul and yet had to set out to break her heart by smashing up her brother? And then suppose you could get out of so doing honestly——?"

"I couldn't. There's no way out—I mean, there would be no way to get out of a fix like that."

"Wait. I don't say any road of your own making. I say, suppose some fatal accident, like falling ill, or losing your wits, or your sight—suppose some such thing as being pitched out of a boat or a cart or—or just the sort of unexpected chances that happen? If something prevented you from nabbing that girl's brother, should you rage terrible about it and be cast down and cuss the luck that stood between you and your duty? Or should you feel glad that, owing to one thing or another, and from no fault of your own, it fell out that you and your side lost and the other side had the luck and won?"

"What a long speech!" he said, squeezing her waist and kissing her mouth. You get cleverer and cleverer every day of your life, you beauty! What is there you can't do? And such skill in words—'tis your mother over again, without the brimstone and treacle she puts into what she says. But I see all you mean. And I can answer the question plain enough, too."

"Twould be the act of God and not your fault at all," she explained. "And then you'd have escaped the cruel need to ruin your sweetheart's family and make her an unhappy woman for the rest of her life."

He laughed.

"No more Death Coaches—you don't mean that?"

"I don't mean nothing. You say you can answer

the question—then answer it, Bobby. All the same, I know the answer very well. You may have a hard job, but you bring a soft heart to it."

"I must run over the points," he said, rubbing his ear against hers. "Yes, there's a lot in a question like that. It goes to the root of a man's conscience to answer it truly. It stirs a man up. 'Tis the whole conflict between love and duty."

"No, it isn't," answered Faith. "'Tis the whole conflict between love and glory. Your duty don't come into it if you're placed in a fix where you can't do your duty."

He sighed.

"If—if such an impossible thing as that was to happen and I found myself in such a fix—Yes, I reckon I shouldn't break my heart over it. If a thunderbolt was to fall, or an earthquake was to rend the earth and so cut me off from my duty—I should take it in a very wise and contented spirit, no doubt."

He heard her breath come quicker and wondered much what was in her mind.

"The act of God," he added. "It must be that, and only that. But God's on the side of right, so it couldn't happen."

"Of course, if it couldn't happen, it won't," she admitted. "And if it did, then you'd know 'twas God willed it. So, be it as it will, your way's clear and there's nought for you to fret about."

He hesitated at her conclusion, but she left him no time to hedge or modify his admission with conditions.

"'Tis enough," she cried; "say no more, and let's talk of something with more sense to it—and that's you and me, and when I'm going to name the day!"

She made love to him and swept his mind from the dark and doubtful cloud that hung over it to the glorious certainty of his sweetheart in his arms. But his fire and enthusiasm were short-lived. He seemed to be a man who dwelt in a dream and terribly dreaded the wakening.

CHAPTER XXX

FAITH AND WARNER BALDWIN

MR. TOM OTTER did not lack for brains, and now certain circumstances combined to make him use them. Though little has been related of the outrage at Daleham Lighthouse, it must not be supposed that such an event failed to create a profound sensation ; indeed, since local politics always awaken wider interest in a hamlet than national affairs, it may truly be said that the village inhabitants were more concerned with the work of the wreckers and its ghastly result than with the fact that Napoleon was free of Elba and marching through France to Paris.

The arch-offender's mouth was sealed by death, for Egg had been destroyed ; but it was clear from the statement of Jacob Merle and Parsons, that two accomplices he certainly had, and concerning these, one scrap of evidence alone existed. Their faces were concealed ; but Jacob had said that they were both men above average stature and that the hands of one were white, of the other red. Here was little to go upon, yet to Tom Otter fell the credit of the first rational theory, and when another heard his view, a side-light flashed upon it and served to strengthen the supposition.

But Tom guessed not there existed anybody else in Daleham who might assist him with practical knowledge. He therefore took his theory to a friend and called on Henry Sidebottom that he might discuss the matter with him.

"Henry," he said, finding the innkeeper in his bar, and alone. "I reckon you be the second wisest man in Daleham, my master, of course, coming an easy first and a long way ahead of you, or anybody ; but I can't go to

him in this matter, because it concerns him a bit too close."

"If you want to talk about laying the ghostes, Tom, I won't hear you," said the other. "We was all properly choused over the job—the reverend included—and though I won't pretend I'm not very glad that unhappy young man be safe, I'm none the less put about, for I'd wrote three parts of a very majestical poem on the subject, and now 'tis waste paper—not to name the fun that certain silly people poke at me."

"'Tisn't about that at all," answered the other. "'Tis about a much more solemn and far-reaching business than that. I'm a bit of a hunter, as you know and the man that understands the ways of four-footed foxes, same as I do, gets to know a bit about the two-footed sort likewise. In a word, I've been doing a powerful lot of thinking lately, and, though 'twill be a shattering surprise to your ear, I do believe I could put my hand on one of the two villains who went to the lighthouse."

Mr. Sidebottom was deeply interested, but doubtful.

"'Tis almost too much to expect from a humble man like you, Tom ; but still, we know that out of the mouths of babes and sucklings the Lord oft confounds the wise. So let's hear what you've got to say, by all means."

"Well, 'tis like this. In the case of a crime, the first question is, why 'twas done ? and the second question is, who would have a reason for doing it ? In the matter of *The Country Lass*, as you pointed out yourself, Bad Egg had a very good reason to wreck her, for he was out with her master, and had threatened at this bar and elsewhere to do him a bad turn and be revenged for some real or fancied wrong."

"Besides that, there was the timber," said Mr. Sidebottom. "It is easy to guess that Egg thought if that unfortunate timber coaster came ashore, he'd get a useful bit of coffin-wood for nothing. And so he would have."

"Well, that accounts for *The Country Lass* ; but there was another boat known to be due that same night, and the thought in my mind was, 'who wished evil to that

boat?' They was all Daleham men in her, and there was the gentleman passenger, and that gentleman passenger had a bitter enemy ashore."

"And who might he be?" asked the innkeeper.

"His own cousin. I pick up a lot in and out between the vicarage and "Four Oaks." In fact, the families think a good deal of me, and they've got every reason for so doing. I saw, long ago, that the young gentlemen were at loggerheads. I've heard many hard words and fierce words pass between 'em, and I knew, through Master Oxenham, that a duel was actually to be fought."

He proceeded to elaborate his theory and advanced many very sufficient reasons for it. He had enjoyed frequent opportunities for studying Warner Baldwin, and he had perceived that the hate he bore his cousin grew greater rather than less. He had heard the doctor reprove him, and he had observed many instances of the young man's cunning and cowardice.

"He's rotten to the core," summed up Mr. Otter, "and my belief is that, not knowing the Frenchy was coming home with a broken leg, he expected the duel would have to be fought, and, rather than stand up man to man with sword or pistol, he'd have been much more willing to let his cousin drown. Then there's more, for 'twas Baldwin who kept the soldiers here and smelled out that Deschamps had really arrived in *The Grey Bird*, though we all thought he had not. And now that the young man and his friends have done him, and got safely off, and the soldiers have gone, he's like a bear with a sore head—Baldwin is. But he's been ordered back to his regiment and will have to be gone in a day or two, unless we can bring this home on him."

Mr. Sidebottom considered, and shook his head.

"There's a lot of reason on the face of it, but not enough, Tom—not enough. We can't think an educated Christian man and a soldier would sink to such an awful bit o' work. 'Tis too much to bring against even the lowest, let alone a born gentleman, with all the advantages he has had."

They had reached this point in the discussion when Faith Tresilion entered to see Mr. Sidebottom; and she

it was who brought another argument to support Tom Otter's tottering theory.

"One thing's clear: 'twas him that tried to hunt down Master Paul," she said. "That's certain, for he told Elijah Newte, and Newte told me. But if you know the man with white hands, Tom Otter, I reckon I know the man with red. By the size of 'em you may guess at 'em, and by more than that. I can't say that it was Elijah Newte that went to the lighthouse, but I can say he's a liar and a traitor and hates my brother and me far worse than ever he hates the devil. And knowing what I know now, I know this: that he would have gladly helped to wreck *The Grey Bird* and drown Nicholas and the rest. But the very last time he was ashore, Nick, who's as trustful as a dog, forgave Newte the past and made friends with him—for his own reasons. But my brother didn't know what I know now—that the wretch is the worst enemy he's got in the world."

"And the only enemy, I should think," added Otter, "for a better young chap don't sail a boat and mind his own clever business."

"Be quiet, Tom; I'm thinking," said Henry Sidebottom. "'Tis a very remarkable thing that Faith Tresilion should come in on the argument in this fashion, for, though you may not see it, what she says goes a good bit of the way to help what you say. The point you'd put now, if you was as quick-witted as you think you are, is just this. If these two big men had a hand in this job, then they must have been in each other's company sometimes. We've got to find out if they were; and I may tell you that is so. As a publican I can prove it. They're known to one another, and time and again they've met here, doubtless by appointment. They've never come in together, mark you, but they've often gone out together."

"I'd like to link 'em together with a pair of handcuffs," declared Otter, "and, please God, I shall see it done afore long. But time runs short, for our young limb of the devil has got to go back to his regiment in three days; and if that happens, so like as not he'll go to war and get shot through the heart, like an honest

gentleman, instead of being hung, like a wicked rascal."

"Suspicion won't do to work upon," declared Henry; "'Tis too vague a thing, and we don't know enough to arrest 'em on, though, seemingly, we do know enough to prove they are both very bad fellows. In these cases you can safely leave the wrongdoer to his Maker. The Lord didn't waste much time looking after Abednego Egg, and the wretch was cut off redhanded, and hurried afore his angry Maker, as we know. And you may be sure if Newte and this young gentleman did that dreadful deed at the lighthouse, 'tis down against 'em, and they'll be called to account for it."

"All true, but I should dearly wish to help," declared Otter. "'Tis one of them cases where a clever and a useful man, like me, properly itches to lend God A'mighty a hand. And I live in good hope that I'll be allowed to do it."

He went his way, and Faith, dismissing the matter, explained why she had come.

"There's something a bit out of the common going to happen, Mr. Sidebottom," she said, and he shook his head at her.

"There's always things a bit out of the common happening where you are," he declared. "I never heard tell of any maiden who's so terrible busy about other people's business and always in the public eye. And I may say it isn't at all what one expects from an unmarried girl, my dear."

"You can't say I do wrong," she argued, gently putting her hand on his arm.

"I don't—no, I don't say that. You're a wonderful plucky creature, and beautiful as you're brave, and if you'd been a princess, instead of a smuggler's sister, the world would have heard about you. You don't do wrong, but you take a terrible lot on yourself, and make history in this place, and it is a very dangerous and unusual thing for a young person to make history."

"It happens," declared Faith. "I don't want to do things. They're thrust on me, and I've got to do 'em for other people. 'Tis for my brother that I've got to be busy to-morrow, and that's why I'm here."

"I'll do what I can in reason," declared he. "For your mother's sake, I'll do anything inside law and order; but nothing dare-devil and venturesome about must be asked of me."

She laughed.

"You've got more fight in you than you think for, Mr. Sidebottom. My mother always says that there's a lot more in you than catches the eye; and 'tis for her sake I come. What with one thing and another, the dear woman have been left a lot alone lately, and though she's very good company for herself, and a mighty deep thinker, and can read print as well as you can, yet time do drag a bit for her; and so it will to-morrow and the next day, for I'm called away."

"Ah!" he said. "And what be you after now?"

"Just a little bit of business for Nicholas. Maybe you'll hear tell about it presently and make a rhyme. But it ban't worth naming till afterwards. You see, as I've told you, Elijah Newte's a very wicked man, and he's got his knife into Nicholas and all of us—just because I wouldn't marry him."

"'Tis enough," he said. "You maidens don't know your power, and 'tis one of the strangest terrors about life that a good, modest, human girl, without a spark of wickedness in her, and not a thought to make her guardian angel blush, can yet have it in her power to send a man to the devil. 'Tis a thing of every day."

She admitted it.

"I've very near sent two there in my time," she replied, "but one was saved. As for Elijah, he's plotting and planning against me and mine, and he's got to be fought, and I've got to fight him. And the long and short is, will you go and see my mother to-morrow, or next day, and spend a few hours with her for friendship, and cheer her up? You'll never repent of it, and you know what she thinks of you. Nobody can list to mother without hearing something to make 'em laugh, or make 'em wonder. And if you take a verse or two of your own fine inventions in your pocket, 'twill help to pass the time. She dotes on your rhymes."

"So be it. I'll carry the Volume," declared Mr. Sidebottom. "I think a great deal of her, and you know I do."

"And when me and my Bobby wed," added Faith, who had no false sentiment in these matters, "we shall come to you for the feast."

"And proud I shall be to provide it," he promised her ; "and, for my part, you can't marry him too soon. You want a solid chap to steady you down, in my opinion. You've had quite enough adventures for one young female during the last few weeks."

"So I have," she said. "And I'm very wishful to wed my gauger. Only—"

She stopped, and he was about to seize the occasion and preach a sermon against the evil of breaking the Customs' laws, when a man entered the bar and saluted him.

"Give you good-day, Sidebottom. And it's like to be the last time, for I'm bound for the wars ere long."

It was Lieutenant Warner Baldwin, and Faith, who fell back as he approached the bar, had leisure to observe him.

Warner affected a hearty and genial manner. He invited the innkeeper to drink, and then turned to Faith.

"Your fame makes you known to all of us, young mistress," he said ; "and maybe you know me well enough by sight if not by name. I beg you to honour me by drinking a glass of port."

But she shook her head and prepared to depart.

"As you please," he said. "'Tis only out of compliment to your bravery and cleverness that I presume to address you." Then he turned to Henry.

"I'm here to meet that rascal, the fisherman, Elijah Newte," he declared ; "the oaf promised to fetch me a fine lobster—a thing my uncle, Doctor Baldwin, dearly loves. He grows mournful at the thought of parting from me, for he is an old man now and begins to need one to take care of him."

He eyed Faith while he talked, but she did not wait long and soon slipped away.

To her surprise, however, she was followed, for a

moment later the soldier overtook her, lifted his hat very politely and begged for speech.

"Newte and my lobster must wait awhile," said he, "for I have something to say to you that is more important than either. Will you do me the favour to listen? It may be worth your while."

She exhibited a graciousness that she was far from feeling at this address, for she hated the man heartily enough, and his oily tones seemed to chime with what she knew concerning him; but this was no time to be squeamish. If Baldwin and Newte were indeed secret companions, and if Newte had helped him, as she now knew, over the hiding-place of his cousin, it might well be that this man was aware of the future, and intended on his side to help Newte against Nicholas.

Now she veiled her feelings, was gracious, and spoke to him.

"I'm terrible proud, I'm sure, Master, though 'tis little enough the likes of me can do for the likes of you."

"Don't say that. The strong have always power to help the weak, and you have proved it and made yourself one of the most famous women in Devonshire. But now you have power to help the State too, and, as a servant of the State, I appeal to you. The subject is a very painful one; but I must not suffer my private feelings to prevent me speaking."

She wondered what could be coming. The man himself was only accosting her on the spur of the moment and trying an experiment from which he had little to hope. But his success amazed him.

"You must forgive me if I am personal," he continued, "and speak of matters relating to your own life. At one time, my cousin, Monsieur Paul Deschamps, forced his attentions upon you and would not take 'no' for an answer. This I merely mention; but it was a source of great sorrow to me when I heard about it, as it showed his ill-balanced and unreasonable nature. However, that is over and you conducted yourself with great dignity and self-respect. I may tell you that his family thought very highly of your conduct."

"I'm glad of that, sir," she said.

"Yes, but in doing what you recently did, the circumstances are different. None mourns the unhappy truth more than I do, but as an officer in His Majesty's army, I am bound to put affairs of State above mere considerations of relationship and family ties."

"Of course, sir. I hope I've done nothing wrong, I'm sure."

Absolutely ignorant of the nature of the woman who walked so demurely and humbly beside him, the lieutenant proceeded.

"You have done very grave wrong indeed. I will say more, my girl; you have put yourself within reach of the law. But you acted in gross stupidity and I may yet be able to save the situation as far as you are concerned. You must, however, do your duty at once."

"Oh yes, sir—indeed, indeed I will!"

"My cousin was not an Englishman and, what is even worse, he hated England. It matters not how, but I must tell you that he has been discovered plotting against his adopted country and doing all in his power against her. He is suspected of great wickedness, though I will not hurt your innocent ears with the particulars."

It happened that in her long watches beside Paul Deschamps at Hordell's Head, Faith had heard the whole of this story and knew far more about it than Warner Baldwin. She was aware of the orders that the unfortunate lad had received from France and how he had declined to comply with them.

"Don't tell me if 'tis anything too fearful for a poor girl's hearing, kind sir. I always thought he was a good gentleman and full of generosity and honour, though I couldn't get to love him like he wanted me to," she answered. And then she put her apron to her eyes and began to cry.

"You need not weep," he said. "I don't like to see those pretty eyes dedewed with tears. And this is no time for them. In a word—you drove the sham hearse?"

"Yes, I did, sir—God forgive me."

"And Paul Deschamps was within it?"

"Yes—that's where he was—in the coffin. We made it of a bit of board that a man brought along and then we tar-pitched it all over; and some of the tar got on to the poor young man—and it isn't off him yet!"

"You know where he is?"

"Of course I know. Didn't I drive him?"

"That's the point. You must tell me where he is."

"And will the King forgive me if I do?" asked Faith.

"He will," answered the other. "If you make a clean breast of it and inform me where my cousin is hidden, then I may take it upon myself to promise you a free pardon."

"Then I'll tell you, Master. But not here and not now. I see 'tis lawful and right that you should know. No doubt he's where I drove him. He bore the journey very well and there was a warm welcome waiting for him. But I can't be quite certain for the moment if he's in that house still, or another. However, I can find out for the asking. You shall know for certain so soon as I do."

"There must be no delay," he told her.

"I see that clear enough. Not a moment of delay shall there be. I've got to go into Plymouth to-morrow morning for mother, and must bide there along with her people overnight; but the next day I'm back home—and then I shall know."

"Plymouth?"

"Yes."

He considered.

"Shall you learn where Deschamps is at Plymouth?"

"Oh no, sir—he's much nearer to us than Plymouth."

"It looks as though I shall have business in Plymouth myself to-morrow," he said. "Let me see. To-morrow you will learn exactly where my cousin is?"

"Yes, I shall. No doubt of that."

"And the next day you will tell me?"

"For certain. But it must be secret, for if I was catched with you it might be found out that I'd squeaked. And his friends would never forgive me."

"Secret by all means it shall be."

"Meet me at the Broken Rocks at midnight, then. And if you be going to Plymouth, you'd better tell that brave sergeant and his chaps to come along again. There's no reason why you shouldn't take the traitor that very night if you want to."

"You are a quick-witted girl," he said. "My object in going to Plymouth to-morrow will be to explain that I have served my country to practical purpose and found her enemy."

"That's terrible clever," she answered, "and if by chance you think to drive to Plymouth, it would be mighty kind of you if you could give a poor girl a lift. I hope it ain't speaking above my situation to beg it?"

Warner was gallant.

"Those eyes could never beg and be refused," he said. "I will drive you and ask no more than a kiss for fee."

"You shall have a kiss at the Broken Rocks—if you're still in a mind for it, sir," she said.

"Meet me to-morrow morning, then, at the Rectory gate. I had meant to ride, but the offer of such company cannot be declined. We will take Doctor Baldwin's gig."

"You start betimes I hope, brave gentleman?"

"At six o'clock we'll take the road."

She promised to be there punctually and they parted, each in the best of spirits.

When Faith returned home, she told her mother of the meeting, and the old woman, who knew all her secrets, welcomed the news with ecstasy.

"You proper, little, cunning pee-wit!" she said, "you bit of your mother! Come here and let me run my hands over 'e. If you don't make the moon jump out of the sky the night after to-morrow, my name ain't 'old tiger Emma, with both legs in the grave'!"

"I'll get my ride to Plymouth for nought, anyway," said Faith.

"And you ride back likewise. But don't you let that dough-faced, red-headed Apollyon kiss you—don't

you let him, for the stain would never come off—the salt sea wouldn't wash it off," vowed her mother.

"Kiss me! I'd sooner ask Elijah Newte to kiss me again," she answered. "It ban't women those men will be kissing afore they're much older, if I'm in luck to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXXI

A SHIP OF THE LINE

SELINA GLANVIL was an early riser, and when, on an occasion of a walk before breakfast to gather a bunch of dewy primroses for a certain young Frenchman, who swiftly returned to health and strength at Tudor Towers, she gazed over the Park wall, a very startling and puzzling spectacle met her view. Unseen herself from the shelter of a beech bole, she beheld the vicar's little gig ; but it was not the vicar who sat in it. Lieutenant Warner Baldwin drove a powerful carriage horse, which swept its load swiftly along, and beside the soldier, very trim and bright in a red riding-hood and a flowered print gown, sat Faith Tresilion.

Selina could not believe her eyes, and such was her astonishment, that the little basket she carried fell from her hand, to scatter the cluster of pale flowers it held. She stooped and picked them up, then watched the vehicle pass along the high road to Plymouth and vanish. She stood in amazement, for by no train of thought was it possible to link these travellers together. Full of the wonder, she returned home and, later in the day, all at Tudor Towers, including Honорine who constantly came to visit Paul, conferred as to what this mystery might mean. Only Selina herself was uneasy ; the others doubted not that Faith knew her own business better than they could, and were confident that Baldwin was the last man on earth to win her to his side. That they were going to Plymouth together seemed clear enough, and, indeed, Tom Otter substantiated the fact ; for when Gilbert Oxenham visited the vicarage, if possible to learn young Baldwin's destination, Tom

declared it. He added information already known to his listener.

"To Plymouth he's gone for certain, and not alone," declared Tom. "My eyes nearly fell out of my head this morning when I brought the hoss and trap to the gate at six o'clock, for there, if you please, neat as a wren and all in her Sunday best, was Emma Tresilion's daughter, that young sea-maid that, in a boat, be worth any two men by all accounts. She gave me 'good-morning,' and was happy as a lark seemingly; but I hadn't time to ask her what the mischief she was after with our red fox, when out he came ready for the road, and away they went together, for all the world like a pair of lovers!"

Oxenham returned with this curious intelligence, and since none could guess what it might mean, and Selina Glanvil, who knew not Faith, felt mightily troubled about it, Gilbert undertook to visit the house of the Tresilions at a later hour and learn if the mother could throw light upon this mystery.

Meanwhile a strangely sorted man and woman went on their way to Plymouth, and Warner Baldwin had no cause to complain of his companion. She was amusing and vivacious and she was beautiful. He began to understand what Paul had felt. Neither touched on their private business, but he alluded to her future and asked her if she would accept a wedding present from him.

She agreed to do so, and thanked him in advance.

"But I'm thinking you'll come back a great hero from the wars no doubt—a Captain at the least—and covered with medals for bravery—and then you won't look at me," she said.

At another time she probed him with words and spoke of the outrage at the lighthouse.

"Two big men, so my Uncle Merle declared. Two chaps above common size and their faces hid up in black masks. And one had hands so white as yours, so he was a gentleman for certain, or passed for one. Now what sort of a gentleman could that be who drowns ships and nearly strangles the life out of an old man?"

"Doubtless the devils came from far away and were

brought here by that dead scoundrel, Abednego Egg," he suggested.

"Who knows? There's some say they ain't so very far off. But one thing's sure; they'll end their days on the gallows, and that's the only proper place for 'em. I'd gladly help Jack Ketch to string up the chap with these hands, and t'other too."

He reproved her.

"I little like to hear a woman say such fearful things," he declared.

"If I do a man's work, I've a right to think man's thoughts," she said. "Perhaps you didn't see them drowned chaps from *The Country Lass*, or talk to their women, who came all the way from Wales—poor creatures—to the burying? But I did; and I'll say more yet, and if the only way to send those anointed dogs to their master, the Devil, was to choke them with my own fingers, I'd do it. Such wretches ain't fit to cumber the earth, or stand in God's sunshine."

"Have done," he answered, "and talk of pleasanter things. No doubt the evil that they did haunts the sinners."

"You might think so, but I know better. Men that could do what they did, wouldn't sleep or eat the worse after 'twas done. Their fate will fall on 'em out of a clear sky. 'Tis brewing—we honest folk may be sure of that; but belike 'twill take God A'mighty's self a week or two to hit on their proper deserts."

"Leave it," he said. "I'll hear no more of these dreadful things in your pretty mouth. They make my blood run cold."

But she had affected him and his manner grew moody and silent. For many miles they jogged along without much speech; but he grew more cheerful at Plymouth and invited her to come and dine with him at the *Rose and Crown*.

She refused, and he asked her if she meant to accompany him back to Daleham in the evening.

"I bide here till to-morrow with my cousin Peter Merle's wife," she answered. "'Twould have done your heart good to hear how he'd have treated the

wreckers if he'd catched 'em. But he's off to sea in a day or two, for his ship, *The Leviathan*, has got to join the fleet in the Straits of Dover."

"Till to-morrow night then," he said.

"To-morrow night at the Broken Rocks after midnight," she answered. "You shall hear what I've got to tell you then; and no doubt you'll have the soldiers ready. Third time's lucky they say. Master Frenchman's so good as caught."

"Have no fear for that," he answered and drove away, while she set her face to the sea and soon reached Admiral's Hard, beneath which the sparkling waters of the Hamoaze spread and rippled to the grey, wooded heights of Mount Edgcombe beyond. Here a scene of immense excitement and swift motion greeted her—such a scene as the foreground of a Turner marine drawing often furnishes. Indeed it was such a scene as the wizard loved to paint. In mid-stream, a mighty "three-decker," with her masts spiring into the blue, floated like a queen, and round about her towering sides, red-sailed lighters and wherries and ketches and all manner of small craft clustered, while half a hundred others rowed or sailed backward or forward from the shore.

Here was assembled a strange crowd—sailors with striped jerseys and pig-tails, and red-coated soldiers; shouting civilians, concerned with cargoes of stores for the ship, and bum-boat women with their market wares; while to and fro went dinghies conveying all manner of people between the shore and the great ship—folk to bid farewell to their sons or husbands. Clergy-men and old officers, mothers and sisters, sweethearts and wives crowded here. Now and then a man-of-war's pinnace flashed from the harbour with a crew of jacktars making the oars bend, and anon high officials arrived in glitter of scarlet and gold and solemnly entered the craft waiting to carry them aboard. It was a scene of intricate and varying life and colour, with the flash of flags from the ship to the signalling station ashore, the tramp of marching men and the occasional blare of bugles from Drake's Island and the fortifications round about. From the

bulks came the gunpowder ; from the victualling yards, the stores ; strings of laden donkeys clattered down to the Hard with sacks on their backs ; and here and there packhorses in file also approached the landing. Round about on the green slopes sat men and women watching the scene, and children and dogs scampered over the grass, now laughing and barking, now whimpering or yelping when a cuff or kick drove them from the path of the workers.

Faith Tresilion marched through the busy throngs calmly enough to the landing-stage and asked a bum-boat woman, who was just being rowed to the battleship, to take her. She agreed and the girl was soon beneath the mass of the vessel. A swarm of men were putting the finishing touches to her black and white paint, and an endless company appeared to be going up and down the ladders ; but Faith had been on *The Leviathan* before and knew her way. She went forward to the forecastle and accosted one of the crowd of tars who, off duty, swarmed round the merchants from shore.

" I'll thank you kindly to tell me if Bo'sun Merle's aboard, young man," she said, and the lad replied that he was certainly on the ship.

" You bide here and don't move and I'll seek him," he answered. " I'm in his watch."

He disappeared amid the crowd, and the girl, though she had some time to wait, found it pass swiftly enough. Peter, when he heard that she was come, sought a few comrades who knew of his great adventure at Daleham, and now a round dozen of men pressed forward to be presented to the heroine of that incident. She held a little court and was made much of by her cousin's companions, receiving admiration, applause and many rough compliments at her feats on blue water.

" You ought to have been a man and come and fight for England," said a tar.

" Her Bob don't think so," declared Peter Merle. " A fine chap she's took, I promise you. I never want to row behind a better."

She had private speech with the boatswain presently,

and his eyes grew round and his mouth uttered a long subdued whistle while he listened.

"If you ban't the most amazing creature that ever went in a red riding-hood!" he said. "To think of that now! It beggars belief!"

"Don't say it can't be done, Peter. For think what falls out if it can't. You be one of us and our good's yours; and there ain't a living man I can come to but you. And you'll be covered with glory, whether or no, for you won't only be serving your own family in their dire need, but you'll be serving the King; and 'twill be a good mark against you I'm sure, and a thing very much to your credit in the service."

"Hold on," he said, "and let me chew a quid over it. At first sight it do look some sizes too large for everyday life; but you can see deeper into a millstone than me—I grant that."

"I'm going to Sarah for a bed to-night," she answered; "and what you've got to do, afore I come aboard again to-morrow, is to put it to your officer, whoever he may be, and hear what he's got to tell about it. No need to name facts too sharply. Trust you to pitch the tale to tickle his ear; and if you do that, I'll warrant the rest will happen."

"The like was never heard," repeated the boatswain, mumbling on his quid. "I tell you such ideas as this come into the minds of men like Wellington and Nelson—God rest his great soul. But for a long-legged, young, female creature like you to dream about such adventures—let alone dare them—it beats cock-fighting. In fact you might say 'twas contrary to Nature, and if you wasn't Aunt Emma's daughter, I wouldn't believe my own ears."

"Do as I say, and if you can get leave for an hour presently, come home to Sarah and tell me what is thought about it. And mind afore all things you don't breathe a word touching my Bobby. 'Twould go against us if you did and all my trouble be lost."

"Don't fear that," he answered. "I'm no fool neither. In fact a very good man when I've got a better woman to lead me—as my wife often says. So you nip

off to Stonehouse to our home ; and if I can get there later I will do so ; and if I can't, then you come off to-morrow at daylight."

She left him, went ashore and presently arrived at a little house in a row off Union Street, at Stonehouse, where dwelt Mr. Merle's Sarah, his twins and his six months baby.

Sarah was tearful, for her lord and master sailed on the day after the morrow, and though he stoutly assured her the British fleet would not be involved in the mighty war that now threatened, but only assist the British armies to land on French soil, yet she doubted and was sad. Faith cheered her and bade her presently bring her family by carrier's cart to Daleham that the children might know their great aunt, Emma.

" 'Twill be a very fine thing for Sally and Jacky and Will, when they grow up, to be able to say they'd known mother," she declared.

They spoke of family interests, and the visitor did not disclose the real reason of her visit. But presently Peter came ashore in some excitement and, drawing Faith into the street on the pretext of making a purchase, spoke to her.

" It's going to be ! " he said. " The idea be very well thought upon, and you may say that it has as good as happened ! "

" How many ? " she asked.

" A whale boat full of men—forty very like, or more."

" When ? "

" To-morrow at the sundown gun."

" And me ? "

" You've got to come along with us. I ain't going to lose sight of you ! We all know you can steer a boat, and you know where we've got to go, which I do not. But it will be a new experience even for you to take the tiller for His Majesty, King George the Third."

" I hadn't thought of that," she confessed.

" And you'd better come aboard to-morrow and see the Commodore himself. He's a good bit tickled and wants to have a look at you," said Peter.

And so it came about that sundown on the following

day saw Faith Tresilion in the stern sheets of a great whale boat from *The Leviathan*, with Peter Merle on one side of her and an exceedingly gallant midshipman on the other. The boat won a cheer as it slipped away and the cluster of small craft round about raised an answering cheer, albeit they had no notion of the business in hand. Then the craft crossed the Sound, headed south-east round the Mew, ran up a couple of lug sails, and with long easy tacks made up the coast past the Start to Daleham Bay.

As yet Faith's services were not needed. She sat and chattered very gaily therefore and told her recent adventures to the admiring midshipman, while Peter Merle steered and the evening shadows lengthened from land to sea.

CHAPTER XXXII

"THE GREY BIRD" COMES HOME

THE man-of-war's boat was abreast of Daleham lighthouse soon after ten o'clock, and not a few, who knew the incidents in which Peter Merle and his cousin had been concerned, regarded the beacon with deep interest.

Then the Bay was crossed, the sails lowered, the sweeps put out, and Faith took the tiller. The night was dark but clear, and the tide was at the turn as the pinnace came slowly in under her guidance. For the foreshore below the Broken Rocks she steered and, bringing her crew and craft alongside a shelf of stone that ran out over a sandy bottom, explained that the ridge extended far into the sea, and that the boat could fall back with the retreating tide, yet berth alongside this excellent landing all the while. One man was left with the boat, the others—not altogether, but by twos and threes, were taken by the girl inshore under the cliffs. There she showed them the Broken Rocks—a range of eighteen masses of sandstone that had fallen in old times from the red precipices behind them and were disposed in an irregular group above high-water mark. They rose out of the shingle and by night could only be distinguished at near approach, since they were immediately beneath the beetling cliffs and of the same colour. In half an hour forty men were carefully concealed behind these rocks in parties of two and three. And two miles distant another company of men, also armed, began to assemble at the coast-guard station.

One other also had business at the Broken Rocks on this eventful night, and not long after her force was safely settled in ambush, while Faith herself talked

with Peter Merle and the midshipman, Lieutenant Warner Baldwin full of business left the vicarage and sought Sergeant Bulstrode. That unfortunate man, much to his disgust, was ordered once more to Daleham on important representations made by Warner at the garrison ; and this time it appeared tolerably certain the sergeant's mission would be crowned with success. His force and himself had marched in and timed their tramp to be at Daleham by nightfall. They were at present drawn up in the Dale Valley, near Appleby's Farm, much to the annoyance of Mr. Cawdle, who had plenty of work on hand himself to-night and felt at a loss to understand their sudden arrival. Thus there were forty sailors ambushed ashore, and five and twenty soldiers not two miles distant.

The lieutenant now met Bulstrode, before proceeding to the beach that he might keep his appointment with Faith. He directed the sergeant to proceed to the cliffs.

"We shall be in the right road there," he declared, "and in an hour from the present time you may expect me. We can then march straight on the man, for I am led to understand that he is not far distant."

This made clear, he left Daleham and proceeded as fast as possible to the Broken Rocks. It was his hour at last. He had waited long for it and plunged through dark and evil places to come at it. But it had struck, and before he returned to the profession he adorned so ill, Warner knew that Paul Deschamps would be arrested. The tide of feeling raged high against Napoleon in England now and Baldwin heartily hoped that his cousin would win short shrift. He pictured him incontinently shot as a traitor, or at best condemned to Botany Bay and exiled for life.

Cheered by this prospect he came to the dark beach and found it silent and apparently deserted. Then a solitary figure broke out of the night and approached.

"You're here," she said, "and punctual."

"Yes—this is too important a matter for any lover of England to take lightly. Your news quick as may be. You know where he lies hidden ? "

"I do, and you'll not have to seek far for him, sir."

"I guessed as much. Bulstrode and his men are back. They wait for me at the top of the cliff."

She gave a little laugh.

"That poor soldier! He's out of luck," she said. "I'll go up over presently and tell him that you've changed your mind and ain't coming."

"What do you mean, woman?" he asked, his voice lifted roughly.

"I mean that, on second thoughts, I reckon it wouldn't be fair or straight to give up the young gentleman. He never done me no harm—quite the contrary I'm sure, and—"

He leapt at her and seized her by the wrists.

"Go back on it and you'll not leave this beach alive," he said. "I'm not here to be fooled by you. Come with me you shall now, to the soldiers yourself, and if you refuse to give him up, then to Plymouth you go, and your doom is sealed as the accomplice of traitors."

She had walked up the shingle before he gripped her wrists and now stood within a few yards of one of the great rock masses. Behind it crouched her cousin and three of the toughest and mightiest men that he had brought with him.

"Let go my hand," she said. "Would you treat me like you treated old Jacob Merle in the lighthouse, you hateful knave!"

At that he fell back from her for an instant and his knees knocked together. But then he darted forward again in a frenzy of terror and rage. He did not reach her, however, for there was a rush behind him and heavy hands fell on his shoulders. He was powerless in an instant and found his arms strapped to his sides and his legs hobbled. Then Merle spoke to him.

"There, you cursed dog, that can only hold your own against old men and girls, for all your inches! Now the boot's got on to the other leg and your tricks are ended! A blight on you for a murdering rogue. 'Tis all over now and you'll be swinging at the gallows and hanging in chains for the crows to pick out your eyes afore you're a fortnight older."

But Baldwin guessed that this was spoke at a venture. The instinct of self-preservation, always keen in a coward, came to his aid.

"Is there no gentleman here?" he asked. "You are making some very terrible mistake. I am an officer in His Majesty's army and return to my regiment in a few days."

"Not you," answered Merle. "And there's no mistake. And we're all gentlemen—all royal princes and dukes alongside the likes of you. And if you've tried His Majesty's army and not served it none too well, by all accounts, now you can try His Majesty's navy, and we'll see if a bo'sun's mate will get the fear of God into you, you long-legged villain. I've known six dozen laid on with good will let the devil out of a man quicker than anything parson could say to him, and you that put out lighthouses and send your betters to their Maker afore their time—you shall—"

The midshipman in command stopped Peter's eloquence.

"Stow it, Merle," he said, "and take him to the boat. You're making too much row. You can preach when we're off. Then he'll have more time to listen."

"I appeal to you!" cried Baldwin; but the other turned on his heel and did not even reply.

Within ten minutes the prisoner was carried to the pinnace, flung flat at the bottom of it and gagged. Then his captors returned to their hiding-places and waited for the great business of the night.

Elsewhere Robert Pawlet, Elijah Newte, four coast-guardsmen and six recruits, secretly drawn together for their size and strength, marched armed from the station to their appointed place beneath, and while they tramped two abreast by the coast-guard walk, their leader and Elijah had some bitter speech together.

"The moon will be up in an hour—what's left of her—and we shall see what we've got to do," said Newte. "I'm wondering you look so glum, gauger, for the job of your life's afore you. And if so be the young woman chucks you on it—what then? One girl's as good as another—or as bad. She's ordered me to light

the blue light to-night, for smart though they call her, she didn't see through our little game."

"Shut your mouth," answered Pawlet. "'Tis poison and death to me to have to work with a dirty rat like you, and I'd sooner do it in silence. I never guessed it might be my cruel duty to run in double harness with such an unclean wretch. And I'll tell you this: 'tis a great consolation to me to know as you'll get nothing out of this but your beastly revenge. And I hope to God there's going to be some hard knocks given and taken this night, and that you'll get a bit more than your share!"

The giant joined in this ambition.

"I'm with you there," he answered. "No man can say of me I'm backward where fighting is to be done. Let me handle Nicholas Tresilion, that's all I ask. I've had a fair and honest down on him this many a long day and to-night my score's paid."

"Fair and honest"—strange words to find in your mouth," replied the other. "And mind this, I'll have no shooting, unless they shoot. We're twelve to four, with you and six of the strongest chaps in the village; and we shall surprise 'em at that; and if with all the advantage our side, we can't take 'em unhurt, then we don't deserve to take 'em at all."

"And dearly you'd like not to," answered the other.

"I'll have no shooting," repeated Pawlet. "Not unless they draw on us first, and that ain't likely, for they'll see the blue light and fear no evil. But you—crooked as a sickle and cowardly as a crow—you'd shoot when his back was turned."

Newte laughed.

"Your duty is to take 'em, and if you think that Nick and Monk, not to name t'others, will lose the run of their lives without a fight for it, you don't know 'em."

The exciseman did not answer and for some time no sound broke from the night but the regular tramp of twelve marching men. Then they reached the sand and the sound changed. The waning moon had risen red over the sea and an off-shore wind swept the falling tide before it.

Then the little smudge of moving figures stood where the sea had retreated and the dim sands shone redly under the moon.

"Left wheel!" said Pawlet, and his band turned to the shore and soon stood beside the Broken Rocks. The dead of night had come and the world appeared to sleep profoundly. Over the sea the moon's ragged mass turned from red to silver, beneath her the lighthouse shone at the western arm of the bay.

Pawlet briefly addressed his men.

"We've got a matter of two hours to wait," he said, "and long afore that we shall see the lugger unless she's already lying in behind Hordell's Head. And here we'll bide behind these rocks till they come ashore with their first load. I don't wait for 'em to bring the rest, because when the men are taken, we can go out to *The Grey Bird* and fetch her in ourselves."

He was interrupted, for Newte's keen eyes had made a discovery in the waxing moonlight.

"There's a boat off the ledge now!" he said. "Good powers—a big un too—for all the world like a man-o'-war's!"

Every eye turned to where he pointed, and thereupon, as though this had been the signal, a spot, till then silent as death, suddenly resounded with the rush and hurry of feet. The red rocks appeared to open and disgorgement. The place was alive, and forty cheerful fellows, rejoicing that their vigil was done, leapt from their concealment and rushed upon the band that Robert Pawlet had mustered. Faith had promised Peter Merle a dozen men, and a dozen awaited him. There was nothing in the nature of a battle. Indeed laughter echoed on both sides for a moment, because the exciseman's company supposed that the sailors acted in error and were here, sent by another authority on the same errand as themselves. No fight was therefore shown, until too late, though Pawlet shouted explanations. Eight of his force, including himself, were already prisoners, however, before the grim truth burst upon them; then those not already pinioned made a fierce battle for liberty and Newte and two others broke away and fled. Chase was

given and two were swiftly over-hauled, but Elijah had broken a man's head with the butt end of a pistol that he secretly carried and fired it at another. He would have escaped altogether had not a woman helped his pursuers. But she knew at a glance whither he was bound, for he had run out over the seaweed covered rocks. Four were after him as he doubled for the secret way and reached it well ahead. He was under the hanging curtain of seaweed and invisible before they reached the spot. Faith, however, had no mind to let Mr. Newte escape ; she led his pursuers forward and pointed out Elijah's hiding-place. Not guessing there was one present who knew the secret, he had done no more than wait behind the weed at the passage entrance, and there with a sudden rush, led by the woman herself, he was captured and dragged out like a rock lobster. He fought and failed. Indeed the hard knocks that Newte had destined for another were not delivered, for he was at odds with men now angry, since he had fired on them, and he was hit hard and often over his skull, rendered half senseless, and presently pitched roughly into the boat, without care as to whether he fell on his head or his heels.

Meantime Peter Merle had spoken to his captives.

" Proper glad to pinch you, my brave chaps, for 'tis a fine thing to drop in on such a rare covey of heroes all to once. And you mustn't think none the worse of us—only of the King's enemies. In a word, His Majesty be terrible short of useful hands just now and his ship, the *Leviathan*—sixty-three guns—as sails to-morrow morn from Plymouth for the Straits of Dover, is cruel in need of a few real handy seafaring men. I was to Daleham a bit ago and marked what dashing chaps you all were—up to any devilries—and so when I heard by good chance of this Sunday School Party, I just thought what a joy and pride it would be for you all to come along with me, instead of wasting your time here—playing pitch and toss, or whatever you was after."

Then Pawlet saw Faith Tresilion beside him and he stared for a moment and almost staggered,

"The will of God and through no fault of yours, Bobby," she said calmly.

He seemed to recover at the sound of her voice, but did not speak to her.

"As you please, Peter Merle. You're in luck. I understand," he said to the boatswain. Others, however, were not content with their lot, and though the coastguard protested very heartily, it was a free man who had most to say.

Indeed more than one made much ado, implored the pressgang to liberate them and explained that they were here on Government duty, under Robert Pawlet, to arrest a band of smugglers.

"What's a smuggler compared to the honour of your country?" asked Merle. "There's no honour or glory to catch a smuggler, especially if you come ten to one against him. Every honest man's work is to fight the French; and they'll pay a long sight better than messing about with smugglers. 'Tis the surprise of your lives, I doubt not, but you'll be glad of it afore long, when prize money's flying about and you feel what 'tis to be in a ship of the line; so come along. Bob Pawlet here knows how to obey and sets you a good example."

Into the boat they went, for all appeals were vain, and there, to the undying astonishment of Elijah, when he came to his senses, he found his old companion fast bound with the rest.

Faith Tresilion stood on the shore and watched their departure. Some cursed her, but the sailors hit them in the mouth and bade them be silent. From the crew of the whale boat she received a hearty cheer, and she walked along the ledge and answered—

"Good-bye, Peter! Good-bye, boys! I've loved my sail along with you. And good-bye, you chaps. Don't be vexed. I'll tell all your families that you be gone so brave as lions to fight against Boney; and maybe one of you'll have his skin yet and bring it back to Daleham!"

"I'd like to have yours, you damned, cursed witch," swore a kidnapped man; but she paid him no heed.

"I hope you'll all be back home again soon," she said—

" all but they two big uns. And let them never show face here no more ; and don't let them knock their heads together aboard the *Leviathan*. They be fools apart, but devils when they get together."

The boat began to move, and she still walked beside it on the rocks and bade her lover farewell.

" I guess you won't be long away, Bobby dear. And when you come back to me, I'll tell you all about it. No good ever came to none that put faith in Elijah Newte ! "

The pinnace slipped to sea. Faith heard the rattle of the oars and the steady ring of the rowlocks. Soon the boat vanished, though the beat of the rowers still remained in her ears. Then that too died away. She stood alone. A strange and eerie silence seemed to hang over land and sea—a peace beyond measure deep by comparison with the din and riot that was ended.

" You shall have your blue light, Nicholas," she said aloud ; " but little you'll guess what it has cost." Then she turned, passed the Broken Rocks, and ascended presently to the cliffs.

She was not elated, and the fire and fierceness with which she had cried her last words soon died out. For the future held darkness and difficulties. To-morrow Daleham must number enemies for her, and she had loved to think that until now none was her enemy. She had played a big game, and she had won it ; but the fruits of victory might yet prove bitter.

Her work was nearly done, and out of good nature alone she sought the soldiery and explained to long-suffering Sergeant Bulstrode what had happened. But the officer pretended to very little concern.

" I'm sorry for my company and I'm sorry for myself," he said, " for this village regards us as a bit of fun, and a soldier don't like to be laughed at more than any other man ; but this is the best news I've heard for a month of Sundays, and to think that sneaking, white-faced chap as dared to call himself a soldier has got nabbed by the press-gang makes me feel that Providence is fairly on the war-path again—and not before 'twas time."

With this reflection the sergeant and his men moved to

their temporary quarters, and before dawn they had departed to return no more.

And Faith, wearied out at last, yet longing mightily for a sight of Nicholas and the words of comfort that he and her mother might speak, returned to the cliffs and fulfilled the last duty of the night.

Nigh Hordell's Head was a little hollow under the cliff edge that faced upon the sea, and now, instead of the industrious Newte, a girl crept there, lifted a stone, found flint and steel and lit a blue light which for fifty seconds sent a steady glare southward. That done, she lighted a second and watched it blaze and die. Then she set out again for the Broken Rocks.

Five miles distant *The Grey Bird* lay, with her great red sail flapping, while Richard Copplestone kept a look out upon the shore, and Nicholas, Monk Karswill and Abel Hooker toiled to bring a heavy cargo on deck. Alongside, the boat was already launched and loaded. For a week the little vessel had hidden modestly amid a crowd of mightier craft near the great round tower of Francis I at Havre ; but the time was not lost, and now, with property that represented a thousand pounds of clear profit to *The Grey Bird* herself, she sighted her home port once more.

The blue light flashed and flashed again ; then the lugger set sail and crept forward.

CHAPTER XXXIII

NEXT DAY

WHEN Faith Tresilion reached home wearied, unhappy and conscious that a mighty chapter of her young life's history was closed, a strange spectacle presented itself to her. It appeared that Mr. Sidebottom, most good-natured of mankind, had stopped with Emma during some of the hours of tension and suspense, and had evidently intended to support the old woman until her daughter's return. And here he still was, but sound asleep. He slumbered noisily in an arm-chair beside the ashes of a dead fire, and close by, in her great four-post bed, Mrs. Tresilion lay also fast asleep and snoring with steady explosions, like a minute gun at sea. Between them on a table drawn to the bedside was a waning candle, that had not been snuffed for two hours and exhibited a dissipated appearance, an empty bottle that had contained Mrs. Tresilion's special nectar, two empty glasses, two clay "churchwarden" pipes, a box of very fine tobacco, and two large books in black covers. One was a Bible ; the other, "the Volume," Henry Sidebottom's collection of his own verses. Faith gazed upon this picture and then woke them. The innkeeper started to his feet, gasped and gurgled and rubbed his eyes ; the mother called her daughter and pressed her to her bosom.

" This blessed cauliflower of a man ordained to keep me company till you came back, and we've drained a bottle and he's read every jack one of his rhymes ; and then we had a dip in the Bible and found Boney in Revelations and spent as pleasant an evening as ever I hope to spend in this world. And then, what with the strain on my nerves, I just fell in a dog sleep seemingly.

But he went off first—like a babe from the bosom did Henry drop away from his empty glass, and set down his pipe and sleep the sleep of the just, and snore, God bless him, like a hoss with the whooping-cough. Never was such a shining light, and all made of kindness. And now, for the love of the Lord, tell me all about it—from the beginning. I'm as fresh as a rose to see you back."

"But I'm not," answered her daughter. "Never in all my born days have I been so weary afore."

Mr. Sidebottom took his leave.

"'Tis half after three," he declared, "and what my Sophia will look like and what she will say when I totter home, be a doubtful conundrum. But life's largely made up of these mysteries and she's not a woman to misunderstand."

"You send her to me if there's any trouble, Henry. But there won't be. Your Sophia's got sense enough to sink a ship, and she'll welcome you with open arms and know that you've only added one more golden feather to the heavenly wings you'll float on when your time comes. To help the widow and fatherless is a very good mark in the book, and the recording angel's always at work on the credit side where you're concerned."

"I don't know as to that," said Mr. Sidebottom. "My head's going like Daleham mill wheel. I haven't drunk such a lot since I was a young man."

"Have no fear o' my tipple," she said. "'Tis great liquor and generous. It don't flatter your tongue and insult your belly, like some mean drink we know about. 'Tis a generous and kingly beverage and maketh glad the heart of man and doeth its duty to the end. You'll be as bright as a new sixpence to-morrow, and proud to think how you helped a poor old lonely mother to pass the time."

"Good night and God bless you both," he said. Then he went forth and Mrs. Tresilion laughed.

"A simple old darling," she declared. "But after his fourth glass—oh my! He was pleased with himself!"

Faith told her that all had gone well.

"Nick's home, and I left 'em getting the stuff up to

the Head. Cawdle and two chaps from Plymouth be there with three wagons and nought to mark 'em but the owls. And they'd counted on Newte, so they're a hand short and the work will be awful heavy. All went very well from our point of view, and my Bobby was glad—I'll swear he smiled. Any way he didn't cuss ; and if I talk any more about it, I shall cry."

" Go to the larder and eat your full and then pack to bed," said Emma. " You're a dinky wonder and you've covered yourself with glory, I'm sure, and your wedding gown shall be all over lace and diamonds ! "

They parted, but before Faith had slept, a sudden terrific explosion afar off shook the cottage and rattled the windows so roughly that several broke. The crash of sound roared round and round the bay and seemed as if its reverberations would never cease. Then Faith, knowing the meaning of this uproar and fearing her mother might feel alarm, descended to her and explained.

" Giraffes and green ginger ! " shouted the old woman, " what's that ? Be the French come after Nick, to get their stuff back again ? Here, take this broken glass off my bed, else I'll be chopped to death when I roll over. And stuff a rag in the broken window, or the night wind will get to my liver and carry me away like a frost-bitten carrot."

" 'Tis Nicholas," explained her daughter. " When all was done and the goods away, and him and the others ready to go back to *The Grey Bird*, he meant leaving a keg of gunpowder and a slow match in the passage from the beach to the Hall. 'Tis all over now. He's never going smuggling no more, and he don't mean that others should ever use the way that father found. And what you heard was the place being blown up no doubt."

Mrs. Tresilion sighed.

" Go to your bed," she said. " 'Tis a feeble and flabby generation and the manliness be dying out of it. I suppose Nicholas will be content to live at home now and eat bread and milk and play marbles with your children, when they come. But his father aloft on a golden throne, will look down and be terrible vexed when he hears his boy have thrown over free trading."

Faith retired and Emma prepared to welcome her son. But he did not come, and when morning dawned *The Grey Bird* was not at her familiar moorings. Indeed she had vanished, and not Faith herself could say whether she was gone.

Honorine came to see her in the course of the morning, for the fact that Warner Baldwin had disappeared had wakened some surprise in two homes, though little concern in either.

She heard the truth and returned to her uncle with it. Then a coherent narrative of recent events was laid before the old man, and, in no small grief that any of his blood should stand within the shadow of such a crime, he visited his other nephew to learn everything that he might tell him. Of his cousin Paul could say but little, but concerning himself he spoke fully and at length. He explained the whole situation with respect to his friends in France and convinced the doctor that he had committed no crime against his mother's country. Indeed he had refused the secret directions of his own great relative, Soult, in that they did not chime with his own sense of honour. Paul went even further and holding his Uncle Upcott as a father confessor, relieved his sad heart of all the horrors that still haunted it when he retraced the past. He concealed nothing, and so it came about that even as his body was now blessed with returning strength and he came home to his mother's house, strong enough to walk again with his arm in hers, so, too, his soul grew purified and he faced the future in a spirit of humility and hope.

From an unexpected source he received an explanation of facts that still remained a mystery to him. But this was not until a later day, and meanwhile, Sir Simeon Glanvil returned to his home and heard of the singular achievement of his daughters in offering shelter and a secret hiding-place to Paul during their father's absence. Not until he spoke with Doctor Baldwin did the baronet abate his indignation at this story; but then the vicar and Paul himself explained the truth and Sir Simeon allowed himself to be convinced.

But events more personal to the heroine of Paul's

escape and return were enacted during the day that followed the raid of the press-gang, and almost before those related to or interested in the twelve vanished men had heard from Faith of their fate, a swift and unexpected sequel developed.

It happened that her own fears were not warranted in all quarters, for though she charged herself with the outrage and explained that she had told her cousin, a boatswain of the *Leviathan*, how he could lay his hand on a dozen strong men, yet no great animosity was manifested against her. The folk were inexorably logical and fair-minded. They perceived without difficulty that Faith was fighting for her own family and that the escape or capture of Nicholas must have meant life or death for her mother if not herself. Somebody had to conquer in that desperate conflict ; moreover, as more than one pointed out, when they met in groups and companies to discuss the question, Faith herself, if she won in one direction, had suffered in another. For she had beaten her own sweetheart and doubtless lost him for ever. The matter gave rise to very widespread discussion, and while some applauded her sisterly zeal, courage and resource, others cried out that her action was evil and only to be explained by the smuggler's blood in her veins. One or two women bewailed the theft of their men ; but not many, for Robert Pawlet had chosen his company from young, hardy bachelors who had none to depend upon them and who would not be gravely the worse for a few months on a battleship, if Fate spared their lives. Indeed some of their elders welcomed their departure in open satisfaction, and during the day the catastrophe was accepted with pretty general resignation. It must be remembered that the press-gang at that date was no novelty, and Daleham had suffered its assaults on more than one occasion in the past.

But towards evening, when the limestone cliffs caught the sunshine, as though red hot, and every crying gull took a flash of roseate colour on its wings, a gorgeous vision burst upon Daleham, and from behind her western promontory suddenly swept a ship of the line.

With a golden ripple at her fore-foot and a train of gold astern, the *Leviathan* moved slowly into the bay and her trucks towered as high as the cliffs, her immense billows of canvas, full of light, ascended tier on tier to the spires of her top-gallants and the pennon that twinkled from the main. The mighty bulk of her beneath and the bosoms of her sails took the sunset glow, and the illumination, catching her against the darkness of a purple cloud, made the majestic vessel flame out in a glory of orange and scarlet, with flashes of fire from her stern glass windows and her brass work. The dim shadows of fighting-ships, that sailed up and down the Channel, were familiar to Daleham's eyes ; but never until now had one of them brought her mighty presence into the bay. For a moment she stood on, dwarfing the lighthouse as she sailed between it and the shore ; then she came up into the wind, a boat swung down from the uplifted heights of her stern and, dropping to the water, soon shot away landward. A crowd had swiftly collected before this unique vision ; but the battleship remained not a moment and was already under way again before her boat, rowed swiftly by sixteen men, sped between the harbour heads, stayed ten seconds, and returned. She merely touched the landing-stage and gave three men time to leap ashore, then backed and rowed away.

The pier heads were black with people now and five hundred men and women saw her overtake the *Leviathan* and catch a rope ; then she was swung aloft like a feather and the monster trimmed her yards, passed parallel with the ridge of the Devil's Teeth and stood off beyond the sea mark that indicated the end of the reef. The glorious light went out of her avalanche of canvas and it towered snowy in the gathering dusk ; then the great fighting-ship faded and grew dim and turned into a grey ghost where the horizons of the sea stretched into gathering night. She appeared so suddenly and vanished again so swiftly, that it seemed as though a spectre ship upon some endless voyage had come, circled the Bay and swum forth again, to hold on her eternal circumambience of earth's unfriendly shores.

But she left a reality behind her, for the men who had been put ashore were Robert Pawlet and two of the coastguards. Those others who had fallen to the press-gang were learning the meaning of life on a battleship.

Robert shouldered his way through the crowd and had no words for them ; but Jenkins and Thorne, both married men, who now returned to their families, were more communicative and each soon formed a nucleus for a gathering company which swarmed round them, moved with them and struggled to get within earshot of the returned natives.

As for Pawlet, he looked neither to the right nor the left, but tramped straight to the cottage on the cliff and there beheld a familiar sight. For Mrs. Tresilion was staring out of the window beside her bed, and her great red face and prodigious bust entirely filled it. She stared at the departing *Leviathan* and did not notice Robert until he reached her.

" Hullo, mother ! " he said, " you'd like to be in command of her, wouldn't you ? "

She greeted him with joy.

" My own Bobby brass buttons, sure enough ! And didn't I say that a man so high in the service ashore would never get took to sea—didn't I tell your girl that very thing ? Not that she didn't know it well enough a'ready. Kiss me ! Kiss your second mother I say ! Faith's round about somewhere looking at the ship and wondering which men she didn't want."

Faith appeared and Emma witnessed the meeting. The girl stood a moment and the man made no movement ; then she went up to him and embraced him.

" You look tired," he said. " You didn't ought to keep such late hours, young woman ! "

" You've forgived me ? "

" There's nougnt else I can do. You're a bee of this hive. 'Tis all said in that. I never troubled, for I knew they couldn't press me, nor yet my mates. Two ordained to come back with me ; two was so pleased with the fun that they decided to stay of their own accord. They didn't know better, poor chaps ; but they

will when she's rolling her lowest tier under in the chops of the Channel."

"And the rest of 'em?"

"The rest weren't asked. They've took it pretty well, except a plough-boy from up the valley and Sandy Bassett, the grave-digger's son, who was to be married next month. Peter Merle was sorry to say 'good-bye' to me; but of course the Cap'n gave the word as soon as he understood who I was."

"You ain't too much angered?"

"Angered? No. Unless it is with myself. But twelve Englishmen can't lick forty of their own sort."

"What did Elijah Newte get?" asked Mrs. Tresilion. "They ought to give that man six dozen a day, Sundays included, and rub in a bit of brine after. He's a murderer and he'll have his fiery chariot, too, like the prophet some day; but it won't take him up."

"Newte and Baldwin are turned down to clean the bilges for a start," answered Pawlet. "Baldwin saw the Cap'n and told a long story, but he wasn't heeded, so the gallows be cheated of both rogues for the moment."

"And may the fust French ball as comes aboard the ship whip his red head off his body, and may the honest ocean fish refuse to eat the carrion!" cried Emma. "And I hope to God as they two reptiles won't prove Jonahs to the poor ship. But if a leviathan be a whale, then they'll have all their time in his belly that they care about, and a bit over."

Emma drew in her head and Faith talked to Robert.

"'Tis the very last time, Bobby. Nick's blown up the secret passage to Hordell's—blown it up with gunpowder. He's going to fish for evermore."

As she spoke *The Grey Bird* came round Daleham Head in honest company of half a dozen trawlers.

"Let's go and meet him," she said; but he refused.

"And find the boat half full of fish, that he's bought off one of the others, and him and his friends all singing one of Mr. Wesley's hymns? No—let 'em have their laugh out. The hive will buzz to-night I reckon; but you don't want me in it. You've done a mighty clever

thing and I've took it mighty patient ; but you're too nice to rub it in, and so is your brother I should hope."

She answered, but not to the purpose.

" I've thought a lot about what you said a bit ago, Bobby darling, and I want you to marry me when the dog-roses be blooming, if it won't be troubling you," she said.

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE OLD ENDING

IT is the fashion of silly people to laugh at any narrative which has the pealing of wedding bells for its colophon ; yet, since every story, unless it conducts a hero and heroine from the cradle to the grave, must take leave of them at some period of their careers, there seem no just reasons why their mating should not sometimes prove an appropriate moment wherein to bid them farewell.

Be that as it may, with the wedding of Faith Tresilion and Robert Pawlet, this account of some few months in their history is broken off.

Honorine Deschamps dearly longed to have joined the bride and bridegroom at the altar rails with her Gilbert ; but circumstances conspired to postpone that wedding, though it promised to be an event of the autumn.

While Nicholas and his mother could not see with her eyes, Faith, in love and loyalty, forbade one sign or evidence of the recent increase of wealth to appear at her wedding, or the feast that followed it.

"He's behaved like a saint," she said, "and to flaunt lace on my gown, or red wine on the table after we're wedded, would be to insult him, and I won't have it. 'Tis my wish that Mr. Sidebottom arranges the feast ; and there mustn't be so much as a whisper that could trouble Bobby."

They did not question her decision in this delicate matter ; indeed Nicholas applauded it.

"Smuggling be the last thing as ever I want to think about, or talk about again," he said. "I've washed my hands of it, and all my lot, save Monk Karswill, be very well content to do the same. Fishing is my trade henceforth."

It was on the fourteenth of June, the memorable day when Napoleon crossed the Belgian frontier and proceeded to his final overthrow, that Robert and Faith were married, and all Daleham turned out to see the sight. The church was decorated with wild flowers, and to mark their regard for the bride, the musicians, who made the music on Sundays, all appeared in their gallery with instruments of strings and wood wind.

Madame Deschamps and her son and daughter were there, with Gilbert Oxenham and Selina and Jennie Glanvil ; but the baronet and his own bride were in London, though from Sir Simeon had come a wedding present for Faith.

Gilbert sat beside Honoreine during the progress of the service, and Selina beside Paul. People of judgment prophesied that a double wedding would be celebrated at Daleham when autumn came, and the niece and nephew of Doctor Baldwin enter the bonds of matrimony on the same day.

Mr. and Mrs. Tom Otter were present, and the poet Sidebottom, with Sophia, his wife ; while of other noteworthy personages who attended the ceremony may be named Mr. Cawdle of Appleby's, Jacob Merle from the lighthouse, and the crew of *The Grey Bird*. The lugger sparkled with flags, where she lay at her moorings, and many another trawler in harbour hung out a scrap of bunting, while those fishermen who happened to be at home, and the coastguardsmen off duty attended the ceremony.

Last of all, on a little trolley, specially built by her son and Abel Hooker for the occasion, came Emma Tresilion herself, and the spectators lined outside the church porch gave her such a cheer that those within the holy building marvelled as to who the new-comer might be. She was trundled in and dragged up the central aisle. She wore scarlet satin and a scarlet bonnet with enormous scarlet flowers. Barbaric ornaments glittered on her bosom, in her ears and upon her fingers. Her trolley squeaked and groaned as it was dragged to the screen and there deposited beside the pulpit. Mrs. Tresilion admitted afterwards that she missed her pipe ;

but she beamed upon the large congregation without a shadow of self-consciousness. Indeed she waved her glittering hand and nodded to Sidebottom and other friends ; she talked to those round about her ; she laughed more than once and became so noisy that the old clerk hurried forward and begged her to be silent.

" Why ! 'tis old roguey-pogey Potter ! " she exclaimed, quite audibly. " If I didn't think you'd gone underground to the wrigglers years and years ago, my old, black butterfly ! "

Then the musicians in their gallery made ready and the choir of young men and maidens prepared to sing as the bride walked in on her brother's arm, and Robert Pawlet, with a friend from Plymouth, who acted as best man, turned from the altar steps, where they stood, to watch them come. Faith wore a white muslin gown and carried one little bunch of her favourite wild roses.

Mrs. Tresilion had already welcomed and kissed Mr. Pawlet in the face of the congregation, and now she did the like for her son and daughter.

" A bride worth calling a bride," she said, quite loudly. " Where's the girl fit to black her shoon ? Not in this church ! "

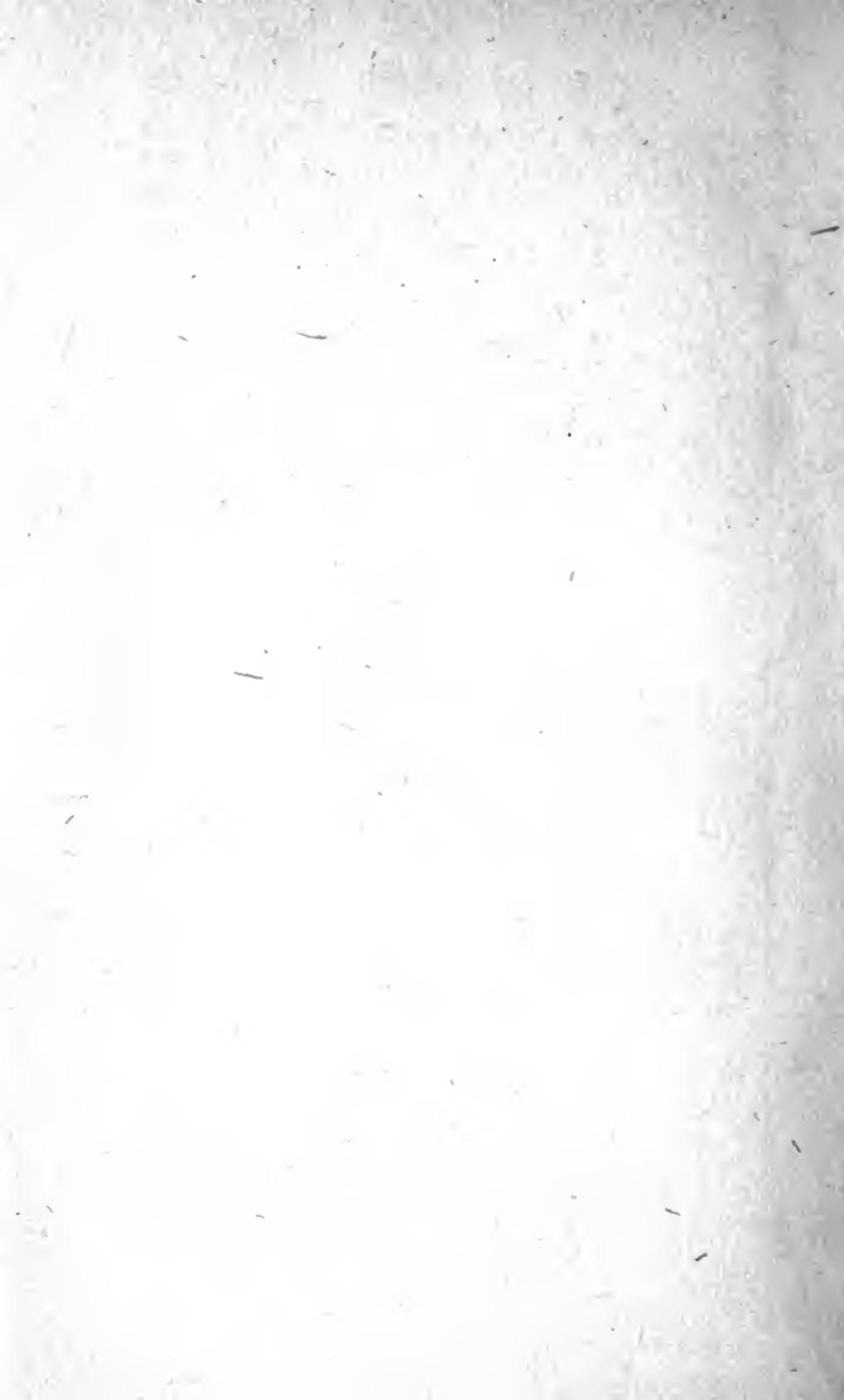
Many indignant persons cried " Hush—hush ! " and one or two, who did not know Mrs. Tresilion, said, " Wheel her out ! " But then swept in the vicar with fluttering robes and the service began.

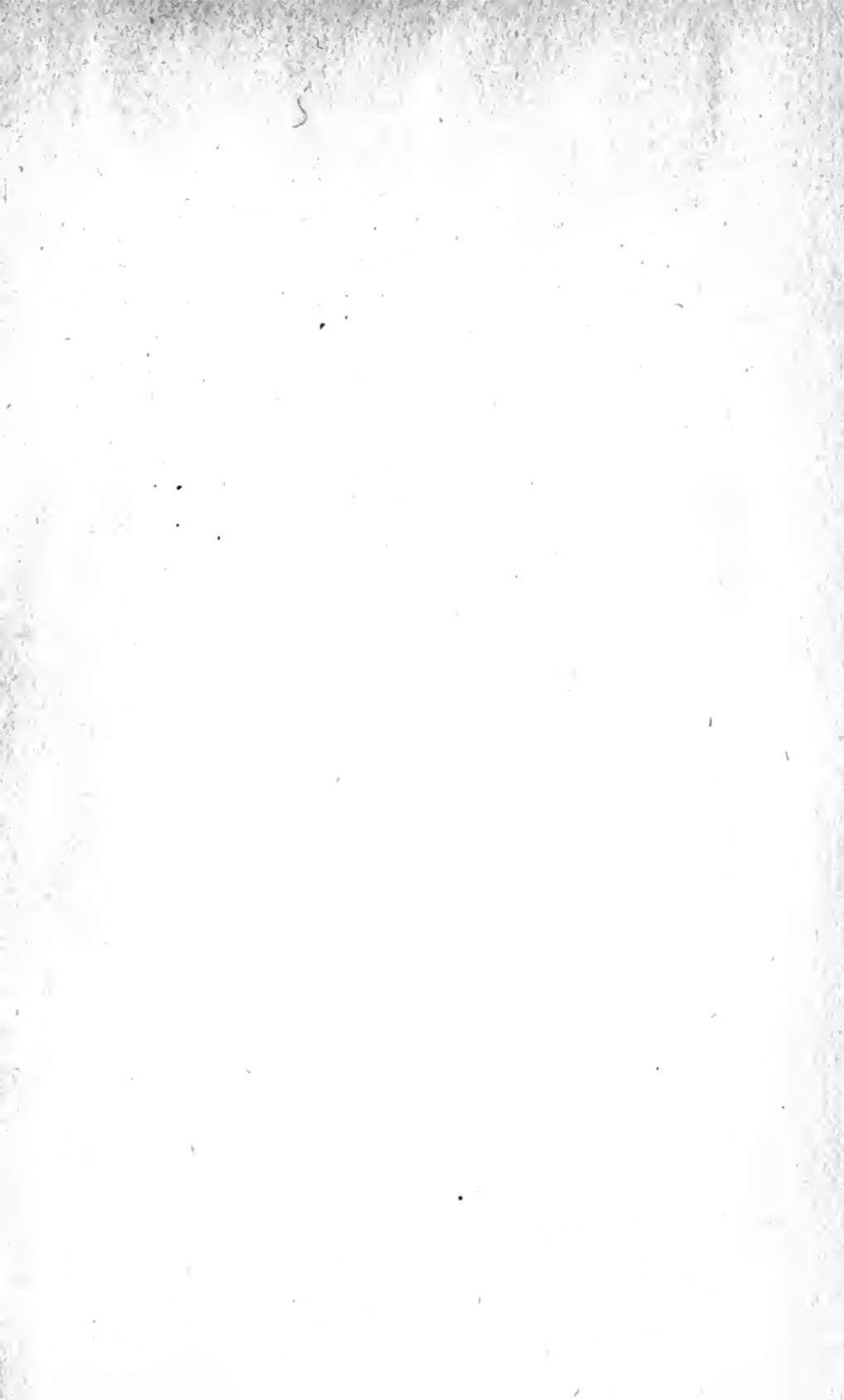
In twenty minutes, Faith and Robert were husband and wife ; whereupon Doctor Baldwin, who dearly loved the Apocrypha, preached to them from the first of Esdras, the fourth chapter and the twenty-second verse :—

" O ye men, how can it be but women should be strong, seeing they do thus ? "

The sermon commended the bride very heartily and twice, to the grief of Mr. Potter, Mrs. Tresilion said " Bravo ! " Many would have liked to echo her applause, and indeed Doctor Baldwin did not appear to resent it.

THE END.





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